One Hundred and Sixteen

SERMONS

Preached out of the

FIRST LESSONS

At Morning and Evening Prayer, for all SUNDAYS in the YEAR.

By WILLIAM READING, M. A. Keeper of the LIBRARY at Sion-College.

VOLUME the SECOND.

The SECOND EDITION.

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DEAR BRETHREN,

The Inferior Clergy of the Church of ENGLAND.

DEARLY BELOVED,



Presume to salute you by the style of Inferiors, not in comparison of my felf, who am in as low a station as perhaps any man now living, of my age and standing and attendance in

our Church. Nor do I intend to derogate from the importance of your ministrations in the House of God. For upon whom are the eyes of all our Lord's people? are they not upon you, whom he hath appointed over them, to give them their spiritual food in due season? By your Tongues the Gospel is preached, by your Hands the Sacraments are administred to all ranks and conditions of men amongst us. By your daily communications with your Flocks, you must needs have a stronger influence upon them,

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than

than your Superiors can have, who generally refide at a distance from them. The prevalence of Religion and Virtue against the powers of darkness, the peace and good order, the justice and charity of human Societies, as well as the everlasting salvation of mankind, do all very much depend upon a faithful discharge of your duties. By your preaching and examples men are inspired with the sear and love of God; and by your prayers the divine Blessings are drawn down

upon men.

TO the effectual performance of which duties, what so conducive as the lowness of your stations, and narrowness of your sphere in the Church? by which you are confined to a constant neighbourhood and sellowship with your people, to be always moving in their view. For you have neither distant Seats of Inheritance, nor variety of Ecclesiastical Dignities and Revenues, to occasion your frequent removals from them. And you are consequently exempt from the temporal cares which attend such Revenues, and from the obligations which you would lie under to the Patrons of such Dignities; and so are entirely at liberty to serve him who hath commanded you to call no man upon earth your Master.

THIS, Brethren, is what I would prefume to suggest to you. I would gladly eradicate that beloved opinion, which operates with some more powerfully than an article of faith; That the favour of the great men of this world, is the only sountain of riches and honours. In pursuance of which maxim, what crowds of

us do I see about their gates? what attendance at their tables, and at all their diversions? What a guard do such attendants keep over all their words and actions both sacred and civil, (as if the Kingdom of Heaven were to be the reward of their circumspection) that nothing may escape them which may seem to reprove the principles or practice of their revered Masters? Insomuch that it would be hard to find any thing in the character of an Artotrogus or a Gnatho so cautious and complaisant, as is the behaviour of these

men-pleasers.

BY fuch a behaviour as this, we flatly contradict almost every page of our facred Oracles, and are far enough, in the end, from crowning fuch labours with any degree of true riches or honours. For pray observe how many Histories you have read of those who being ordained Ministers of God, have made themfelves much more eminently the Servants of Men; how by a too late repentance they have bemoaned their prevarications, and wished they had been true to their religious Vows; and how faded and nauseous are those shortlived flowers (or rather weeds) of earthly favours, which they gathered fo studiously to adorn their monuments. The same sentiments might you fee, if you could fee what is writ-ten in the hearts, or what will be written in Books, of all men-pleasers to the end of the world.

ON the contrary, what was it which ennobled the poor Prophets and Apostles of old, and caused their names to shine like Stars of the A 3 first first magnitude, in the records of everlasting Glory? Was it not that entire freedom of serving God, which they maintained by being content with the hair-cloth, the leathern girdle, and the diet of locusts, i. e. any mean food and raiment which would fatisfy nature, and keep them from purchasing the favours of men with the honour of their great Master in Heaven? This their unshaken adherence to the divine Will, their contempt of all earthly Rewards in comparison of God's Favour, their impartial reproving of Sin without respect of persons, gained them more veneration even in the minds of the most guilty Offenders, than any perfidious Teachers who were known to betray their trust, could ever attain to. And I question not but the Devil himself reverences those holy Saints of God, who have bravely refifted him, and facrificed themselves in withstanding his fiery darts, while with the greatest scorn he strips the gawdy traitor of those ornaments which he got here by finful compliances.

I can never be of that man's mind who said, Happier is that piece of wood which is carved into an image, and set up to be worshipped, than that which is used to make the sire. I esteem it, I know it to be infinitely more glorious and advantageous, to light the sire upon God's Altar, and raise the slame of a holy Zeal in the hearts of his People by my religious Ministrations, than to be diverted from such service by the enjoyment of all the Kingdoms of this World and the Glories thereof.

THE business of our Calling, Brethren, is, to be Masters in the spiritual Israel, the Kingdom of the Messiab, where we have a large field of Dignities and Revenues before us, such as they who are most willing to oppress us with poverty and contempt, cannot withhold from us. How contrary such oppressors act to the Laws of Christ, which provide that they who preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel, I may take occasion to shew hereafter at large. In the mean time let us look up to the Lord of this Kingdom, who hath graciously promised, that when we go forth upon his Mission without purse or scrip, he will take care that we shall want nothing which is needful for us. In full affurance of this promise let us gird up our loins, and apply with all our might to finish the work which he hath given us to do.

OUR diligent application is the only ground, upon which we can build any rational hope of obtaining the promised Blessing. Alas, the pains which are commonly taken, have been too long tried, and found to fall short of the desired effect. Corruptions in faith and manners prevail against us, and the voice of blasphemers grows louder than ever: And wherefore? We need consult no other Oracles, but the Forms of our Ordinations for a reason of all this.

I wish we would all resolve to read over those Forms once a month for some years together, that we might never lose (as we too commonly do) the memory of those promises and vows A 4 which

which we then made, and took the holy Sacrament upon them, to order our lives and stu-dies according to the rules which are there laid down, and were then folemnly charged upon

I crave leave to lay before you the abridgment which Dr. Nicholls has given us of the Bishop's charge at the Ordination of Priests. This excellent Exhortation, fays he, contains, First, an Admonition to the persons to be ordained, that they confider the great weight and importance of their imployment, which is to make provision for Christ's family, and to ' feek for his lost sheep; and also the danger of ' neglecting their duty, fince all miscarriages' which shall happen thro' their negligence, shall be feverely required at their hands. Secondby, That they use the utmost of their diligence in the discharge of their function, that they may discharge their consciences by performing the duty required of them; That they may make a thankful return to their gracious Master, who has advanced them to so honourable an office; and that they may avoid the giving occasion of other persons transgreffing their duty after their example. And lastly, It fuggests to them the means they should make use of, to enable them to discharge their duty aright; which are, to pray for the affiftance of God's holy Spirit, diligently to study the holy Scriptures, to lead a life of exemplary Piety, and to avoid, as much as may be, all secular business and study.

THE same Dr. Nicholls observes upon the Presace to the Ordination-offices, how admirably St. Chrysostom sets forth the use which the diligent study of holy Scripture is of to all Clergymen, in his book of the Christian Priesthood, which can never be read often enough by persons of our function. This book is published in Greek and Latin by Mr. John Hughes, and lately rendred into English by Mr. Henry Hollier, and makes an octavo of about four shillings or a crown price. Which being easy both to be purchased and perused, I hope no Clergyman will be long without it, who is desirous to know his Duty and to do it.

SINCE I wrote this Preface, I am obliged to insert the following passage. I have been at a Visitation held by the Right Reverend Edmund Lord Bishop of London, at St. Paul's, May 28, 1730. where I heard his charge to his Clergy; which, without being prejudiced in his favour (for which I have no cause) I think was so full to the honour of God, and the present state and circumstances of Religion amongst us, that I heartily wish it may be printed, and hope it will appear in the World before these two Books of Sermons; and then not only every Clergyman, but any person who can read English, will reap great benefit by the perusal of

NOW this, dearly beloved, brings us to the point which I chiefly aim at. If we can but prevail with our felves to fit down every day and fearch the holy Scriptures, we shall by degrees find more pleasure in them, than in

any other kind of imployment or diversion. And when we are pleased with them our selves, we shall endeavour to render them delightful and useful to our People. For we shall evermore experience the truth of that holy Gospel, that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth will speak. You may certainly know a man by his communication. The earthly man speaks of the earth; the things of the body are what he most delights to discourse of: but he who is of God, speaks the words of God. Out of the good treasure of his heart he brings forth good things, while the tongue of the vain man is continually proclaiming his vanity.

THIS, I say, is the good fruit which will spring up in us from a diligent study of the Word of God; it will gradually fill us with just notions of his divine Majesty, with his love and fear, with a sense of his Presence, with a zeal for his Glory, with the graces and virtues of

his holy Spirit.

SUCH fruits must appear, and eminently slourish in us, if we will maintain the character of Divines and Spiritual Men. We shall never be able to spiritualize others in the exercise of our Ministry, if we our selves are earthly and sensual; we shall never kindle in the People a zeal for the things of God, while we show our selves cold and indifferent about them.

BUT if we would but be true and faithful to the vows which we have taken upon us, if we would but apply our selves to commune with

with God and meditate in his Word, to pray and preach and perform all the offices of our Miniftry with that constancy, fincerity, and devotion which the laws of our Profession require of us, what glorious effects would fuch a Spirit of God in us be able to produce? The Devil and his Instruments are afraid of nothing so much as of this Spirit. They are constantly upon the watch to suppress and quench it, as a fire which will destroy their Kingdom. They are incessantly pouring out a sea of reproach, contempt and blasphemy upon it; in which they are affisted by a fort of people, who yet would be thought friends to the Christian Ministry; nay sometimes by the Ministers themselves; whom I wish I had never heard speaking too lightly of their own facred Administrations, and even declaiming against Preaching as a work which might be excluded both from the Press and Pulpit. Whereas I affirm, that nothing is so apt to soften the hard hearts of worldly men, to convince them of fin, to enlighten them with the faving knowledge of God, and enflame them with the love of Piety and Virtue, as this work, when rightly performed.

GOOD Preaching is an effectual means to bring people to the publick Prayers and Worship of God. And the some may resort to it at the first, more out of curiosity than devotion, yet by the hearing of the ear, the understanding will in time be enlightned, and the heart affected and warmed with the things of God. You know how our Lord compares his Gospel to seed sown in the ground, which lies buried for a while as if it were quite lost, but afterwards springs up

to a great encrease of fruit. Even so must we plow and sow in hope. We must not be discouraged at the hardness of mens hearts, the deadness of their faith, the dulness of their apprehension. For tho' there are many who are like stony and thorny ground, that will not bring forth fruit to perfection; yet many who now seem to be such, will not prove such in the end. There is a time when the Father of Spirits will regenerate their affections, and create a new and clean heart within them; which tho' it may seem tedious to us, yet let us not grow weary nor abate of our diligence; for at length we may see the fruits of our labours with pleafure and satisfaction.

WHAT a fatisfaction must it be to us to be Instruments in God's hands of eternal Life to any of our People? And what a service to the Community wherein we live, if by our publick Discourses once or twice a week, we can perfuade men to break off any destructive courses of debauchery, malice, or revenge, which they may be unhappily engaged in; and to be so conscientious towards God and man, so diligent in their honest callings, so chaste, temperate, meek and humble in their conversations, as that they may be a comfort to themselves and to all that belong to them! These are the fruits of sound and ferious preaching; and they will certainly encrease in proportion to our skill and diligence in the performance of this Duty. Which should animate us to cultivate and improve our Talent this way.

THE furest means that I know of, to improve our preaching, is, daily to read the holy Scripmay hardly fail once a week to compose a useful Sermon for the Lord's Day sollowing. And that which I conceive to be most likely to hold us constant to this exercise, is, to preach in a method, either catechetical, or upon the Lessons, Epistles or Gospels, or otherwise as every man shall judge most expedient for himself, and prositable for his hearers. For in this method his subjects will lie in a straight line before him, and save him a good deal of time and pains, which we often spend in considering what to preach upon, and too commonly pass the whole week without fixing upon any thing. By the method which I have taken, I have found my pains much facilitated in the course of Sermons which

I here publish.

BESIDES the benefit which a constant method of good preaching will bring to the People, it will be no less advantageous to our selves. For it will make us well acquainted with the Word of God, and with the Works of other grave and ferious Writers; and enable us upon any emergent occasion to explain the difficult pasfages of the facred Text, and to rescue it from the Cavils of ignorant, or ill-defigning men. It will furnish us with a treasure of divine Wisdom, out of which we may readily draw cordials for the afflicted, resolutions for the doubtful, encouragements for the feeble-minded, and fuitable reproofs for the various forts of offenders, according as the nature of their fins shall require. Hereby we shall maintain the dignity of our profession, and approve our selves as sufficient Ministers of Religion, thoroughly instructed for all the occasions and good purposes of it. Our thoughts and inclinations will be so turned to divine things, that our whole conversation will savour of them, and we shall not want to amuse our selves with other studies, nor catch at every invitation which calls us out to the business or entertainments of the World, having much better food for our Souls, much nobler subjects for the employment of our time and the exercise of our meditations.

IF any of my poor Brethren shall plead his inability to purchase books for this study, I crave leave to fay, that a few books, well chosen and carefully perused, will serve his turn for a good And when by his well-studied and weighty Discourses he shall have made full proof of his diligence, let him not doubt but the Providence of God will raise him up such friends, as by gift or loan will supply him with whatever of this kind he may have farther occasion for. Nay, if his own natural parts or acquisitions should be but mean, and even contemptible at his first setting out, yet by the Bleffing of God upon his unwearied endeavours, he may improve to a degree of admiration and excellence; as many unpromising Students have done, not only in this, but likewise in the study of all other ingenious Arts and Sciences. Let but a man have a hearty good will to the business of his Calling, and he that teacheth man knowledge, never fails to accomplish him in it. it and the

IF we can but make it our meat and drink so do our Master's work, he will graciously carry

us through all obstructions which may lie in the way of it. Do we want the Necessaries of this The ready way to obtain them is, not so much to court the Patronage of men, as to feek the Glory of God in the first place. Would we fain see our neglected Churches repaired, adorned, and beautified? Let us take care to bring clean hands and pure hearts to offer in them the Sacrifices of Prayers and Praises to God. Let us prepare our words to speak so worthily of him in the Congregations of the People, that they may be duely affected with a sense of his Presence, and willingly kneel before him, and worship him with an holy Worship: and then they will be easily inclined to regard the decency and good order of his House, and to bear the charges of its necessary repairs and ornaments.

SURELY to glorifie God is the most honourable, most advantageous service, which man is able to perform. And who so capable of glorifying him, as we who minister to him and his People in all the facred Offices of his Church? In going before our Congregations, and animating them by our own voice and gesture to shew forth the Praises of the divine Majesty, to recognize him in our Creeds and Confessions of Faith, and to reverence and adore him in all the various parts of religious Worship. In the reading and preaching of his Word we are his Ambassadors (let the enemies of Souls explode our character, with as much rancour as they can) we have our great Master's credentials to shew for it, that we are Ambassadors from him to our People, to acquaint them with the will and pleasure, and to reconcile them to the Favour of God. How should this character excite us to be zealous and unwearied in the work of our Mission? To make our Assemblies for publick Worship, first as devout, and then as full and frequent as ever we can? well knowing that God is most properly glorified in his Church, and his name most highly exalted in the Congre-

gations of his People.

NOW if we believe that gracious Promise, that those who turn many to Righteousness, shall shine as the Sun in the Kingdom of Heaven; if we remember that saying of our Lord, that he will most highly applaud before God, Angels, and Men, those who have done him most honour upon Earth; what dignities are so excellent, what revenues so great, as those which are to be found in the service of this all-sufficient, all-gracious Master! Can we think it a hardship, that he claims our whole service for such rewards, that he injoyns us to call none upon earth Master in comparison of him?

GO now, and spend that time at the Levées and Tables of great Men, in waiting upon their pleasures and courting them for a Benefice, which you ought to employ in attending upon God, and composing with his Assistance such a Discourse as you may pronounce to his Glory and the Improvement of your People in some one or more of the graces of his Holy Spirit. Neglect if you can those most laudable Studies and Spiritual Exercises, which will by degrees fill your own Minds with the light of true Wisdom, and the most solid and lasting Satisfactions; which will raise you far above Contempt, and render you venerable in the eyes of all that know you; which will convert

many of your Enemies to Friends, and fortifie you against the rest, that they cannot hurt you: Neglect them, I say, if you can, for those temporal Benefits, which you will neither possess with true honour, nor review at your End with any comfort, when you shall see your own Souls, and the Flocks committed to your charge, destitute, poor, and naked of Spiritual Graces, by reason of such

Neglects.

You know, the End which the best Philosophers proposed in their Studies, was, to find out a Happiness which was not dependent on the will or humour of the World about them. This Happiness is brought to light by the Gospel of Christ, and obvious to all the Professors, but most eminently to the Ministers of it. What! cannot we be happy, without asking leave of the World? We that are his Ministers who hath all power in Heaven and Earth? who hath promised us manifold Advantages of his Service even in this present Life? who hath fet us up as Lights of the world, that others feeing our Faith in him, may walk in the same steps of a pious dependance; shall not we proclaim the Happiness of our Lot, and the veracity of our Master, by serving him without fear of any Evil that can befall us in the way of our Duty? Let our regards from Men be as cold, and our circumstances as straight as they some time were to him who said, I am so fast in prison, that I cannot get forth; we will bravely fay with another in such circumstances, Restat iter cælo, 'Let them engross Earth and Sea to themselves, so ' long as they leave the Heavens open to us, we will make our felves wings, and afcend thither, Vol. II.

xviii The PREFACE.

and surmount all the Hardships to which they would confine us.

Nothing can confine us to Hardships, but a want of that Zeal in our Ministry which I have been recommending. Let us not be cold in our love to God, and then he will quickly warm the hearts of Men towards us. A faithful observance of the Vows which we made when we entred into his Service, will produce wonderful Effects. Let us but once unanimously act up to them, and our Success will be glorious.



THE

TEXTS

Of the SECOND VOLUME.

SERMON XXVII. On the Fourth Sunday in LENT.

Gen. xliii. 26. And when Joseph came home, they brought him the Present which was in their hand, into the House, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. Page 1

SERMON XXVIII. On the Fourth Sunday in LENT.

Gen. xlv. 5. Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with your felves, that ye fold me hither: for God did fend me before you, to preserve life.

p. 13

SERMON XXIX. On the Fifth Sunday in LENT.

Exod. iii. 9, 10. Now therefore behold, the cry of the Children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the Children of Israel out of Egypt.

p. 26

SERMON XXX. On the Fifth Sunday in LENT.

Exod. v. 1, 2. And afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a Feast unto me in the Wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go. p. 40

SERMON XXXI. On the Sixth Sunday in LENT.

Exod. ix. 16. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

p. 54

SERMON XXXII. On the Sixth Sunday in LENT.

Exod. x. 1, 2. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him: and that thou mayst tell in the ears of thy son and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done amongst them, that ye may know how that I am the Lord. p. 67

SERMON XXXIII. On EASTER-DAY.

Exod. xii. 21. Then Moses called for all the Elders of Israel, and said unto them; Draw out and take you a Lamb according to your Families, and kill the Passover.

p. 89

SERMON XXXIV. On EASTER-DAY.

Exod. xiv. 30, 31. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians: and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servent Moses.

p. 93

SERMON XXXV. On the First Sunday after EASTER.

Numb. xvi. 7. — Ye take too much upon you, ye fons of Levi. p. 106

SERMON XXXVI. On the First Sunday after EASTER.

Numb. xxii. 18. And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.

p. 121

SERMON XXXVII. On the Second Sunday after EASTER.

Numb. xxiii. 7, 8. And he took up his Parable, and faid, Balak the King of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the Mountains

tains of the East, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defie Israel. How shall I curse whom God bath not cursed? Or how shall I defie whom the Lord bath not defied?

p. 136

SERMON XXXVIII. On the Second Sunday after EASTER.

Numb. xxv. 10, 11, 12, 13. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phineas the Son of Eleazar, the Son of Aaron the Priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel (while he was zealous for my sake among them) that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold I give unto him my Covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the Covenant of an everlasting Priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

p. 150

SERMON XXXIX. On the Third Sunday after EASTER.

Deut. iv. 1. Now therefore hearken O Israel unto the Statutes and unto the Judgments which I teach you, for to do them; that ye may live, and go in, and possess the Land which the Lord God of your Fathers giveth you.

p. 164

SERMON XL. On the Third Sunday after EASTER.

Deut. v. 2. The Lord our God made a Covenant with us in Horeb.

p. 178

SERMON XLI. On the Fourth Sunday after EASTER.

Deut. vi. 6, 7. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou lyest down, and when thou risest up.

SERMON XLII. On the Fourth Sunday after EASTER.

Deut. vii. 12. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments and keep and do them; that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the Covenant and the Mercy which he sware unto thy fathers.

p. 208

SERMON XLIII. On the Fifth Sunday after EASTER.

Deut. viii. 3. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with Manna, which thou knewest not, neither did the

not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, doth man live.

p. 223

SERMON XLIV. On the Fifth Sunday after EASTER.

Deut. ix. 6. Understand therefore that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it; for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people.

p. 236

SERMON XLV. On the Sunday after ASCENSION-DAY.

Dout. xii. 32. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it:

Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish therefrom.

p. 251

SERMON XLVI. On the Sunday after ASCENSION-DAY.

Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder: And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them: Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

p. 266

SERMON XLVII. On WHITSUNDAY.

Deut. xvi. 10. And thou shalt keep the Feast of Weeks unto the Lord thy God, with a tribute of a free-will offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God, according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee.

p. 281

SERMON XLVIII. On WHITSUNDAY.

Isaiah xi. 1, 2. And there shall come forth a rod out of the Stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

p. 294

SERMON XLIX. On TRINITY Sunday.

Gen. i. 26. And God Jaid, Let us make Man in our Image, after our likeness.

WAY.

SERMON L. On TRINITY Sunday.

Gen. xviii. 1, 2. And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sate in the tent-door in the heat of the day. And he lift up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground.

p. 327

S E R M O N LI. On the First Sunday after

Joshua x. 12, 13, 14. Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amerites before the Children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou Moon in the valley of Aiglon.

And the Sun stood still, and the Moon staid, until the People bad avenged themselves upon their Enemies. Is not this written in the Book of Jasher? So the Sun stood still in the midst of Heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.

And there was no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Ifrael.

p. 342

SERMON LII. On the First Sunday after TRINITY.

Joshua xxiii. 2. Take good beed therefore unto your selves, that ye love the Lord your God. p. 357

SERMON LIII. On the Second Sunday after

Judges iv. 14. And Deborah faid unto Barak, Up, for this is the day in which the Lord bath delivered Sifera into thine hand. Is not the Lord gone out before the P So Barak went down from mount Jahor, and ten thousand men after him.

p. 372

SERMON LIV. On the Second Sunday after

Judges v. 1, 2. Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. p. 386

SERMON LV. On the Third Sunday after

1 Samuel ii. 20. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his Wife, and said, The Lord give thee Seed of this Woman, for the Loan which is lent to the Lord. And they went unto their own home.

p. 402

SERMON LVI. On the Third Sunday after

1 Samuel iii. 12, 13. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken against his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. p.415



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SERMON XXVII.

On the Fourth Sunday in LENT.

MORNING.

G E N. xliii. 26.

And when Joseph came home, they brought him the Present which was in their hand, into the House, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.



ANIFOLD was the Sin which Joseph's Brethren had committed against him, out of meer Envy and Jealousie of his future Superiority over them.

I. THEY intended to have shed his blood. Certain it is, that some of them were so barbarous as to propose the dispatching of him by putting an immediate end to his life; as appears from Gen. xxxvii. 20. where they are reported to say, Come now, let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him.

z. THEY sinned in throwing him alive into a deep rocky pit, out of which he could never climb without help, and so in all likelyhood must have lain there, and perished by a more painful and lingering, though less bloody Death.

Vel. II.

3. THEY sinned in selling him for a Slave; by which act they deprived him of that liberty to which he was born, and of the sweet Society of a dear Father and Brother: they banished him from the Worship of the God of his Fathers, to dwell amongst Aliens who were of another Religion. They exposed him to all the hardships, vices and corruptions of a wicked World, and endanger'd the breaking of his Heart by mourning for the loss of his friends and countrey.

AND lastly, they were the authors of such a piercing intolerable affliction to their aged Parent, as threatned to bring down his gray hairs with untimely death to the grave. In all these respects foseph's Brethren sinned, in what they acted against him.

AND their conscience, no doubt, often presented their Sin to their view in all these, and perhaps more frightful colours. The Conscience of their cruel usage of their Brother accused, upbraided, revised them. It register'd all the passages of their barbarity in the Tables of their heart, as indelible as any Inscription upon marble. It haunted them with the Ghastly image of their injured Brother, now shrieking under the scourge of some imperious Taskmaster, now groaning under the fetters of a prison, now breathing out his Soul in the agonies of death. They could not be alone, but they dreaded that something would appear to them from the World of Spirits, and cite them in his name to the divine tribunal.

THE very Name of Joseph was a word which filled them with gall and bitterness: They would even chuse to be deaf rather than hear it, and dumb rather than pronounce it. See at what distance they kept from it, when they gave the Governor an Ac-

count of their Family. Thy servants are twelve Brethren; no, they knew of no more than eleven: But oh, how fond are they of the first number! what would they give to make it compleat! At last it comes out, very faintly and unwillingly, One is not. But why he was not, or how he came to be wanting, that they abhor to tell. To say that they had plotted his death, had sold him, had sent him into slavery, and perhaps into another World, was a confession which they could not frame their tongues to pronounce; and therefore they slide over the mention of this Brother as softly and briefly as ever they can; One is not.

THE Governor to whom they gave this account, needed no confession: He knew as well as they could tell him, who that one was, and how they had used him. And he knew one thing which they were wholly ignorant of, viz. that this same lost Brother was still in being, and stood now before them. He was now making good the former Prognosticks of his Superiority over them, which he sulfilled according to the will of God, and the just demerits of his Brethren.

THE Severity of Joseph's carriage to his Brethren was justifiable, on account of their former ill-usage of him: especially since he did them no hurt, but by this means brought them to a sense and acknowledgment of their sin against him. He treated them as Spies of the Country, and kept their Brother Simeon as a hostage for their sair-dealing, 'till they should prove themselves true men, by bringing their youngest Brother Benjamin along with them. The Jews have a tradition that he detained Simeon as his prisoner rather than any of the rest, because he had

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been most forward to put Joseph out of the way. But however he might justify his resentments towards this Brother, yet it looks like carrying them too far, to afflict his Father with the supposed loss of more Children. All that I can offer in excuse for this is, that he speedily made him a very ample amends in discovering himself, and sending for his Father and whole Family into Egypt, whereby they were assured of a comfortable subsistence during the five remaining years of Famine, and also saved the trouble of frequent and hazardous journeys to setch corn at so great a distance.

IT has been made a question by some, whether Toleph preserved his Religion in the Land of Egypt. As to his internal principle and persuasion, we cannot doubt but he did. So did his great grand-father Abraham, when he was driven by a famine to fojourn there. So did his father and brethren when they came down upon the like occasion. It must be confidered, that Egypt was nothing near so idolatrous at this time, as it was afterwards. And we may be fure that Pharaoh, who saw so much of God in Toseph, would readily permit him to worship God in his own way. His marrying him to a daughter of the Priest of On or Heliopolis in Egypt, had no more influence on him in point of religion, than it had upon Moses when he married the daughter of Jethro priest of Midian.

NEITHER is it any just objection to Joseph's Religion, that he swears by the life of Pharaoh; for the primitive Christians, who were very scrupulous of saying or doing any thing that looked like Idolatry, yet made no difficulty to swear by the life of the Roman Emperor, under whom they lived, when

they were required to do it; though he was a groffer Idolater than we can imagine this Egyptian King
to have been: but by the life of the King or Emperor, in this form of protestation, they meant no
more than this, that what they affirmed, they would
do as certainly as they wished, and hoped, and prayed to God for the health and safety of their Prince,
which they esteemed their greatest Temporal Bles-

fing, as Tertullian explains it.

THE first supply of corn being spent in Jacob's family (which indeed we may presume could not last long, if it were but ten affes loads among threescore and ten persons, though doubtless is was a great deal more) Jacob calls upon his Sons to go again and fetch more. But they not daring to go without their younger Brother, and their Father being very loth to part with him, Judah, who was a very good Speaker, persuaded his Father to trust God in this exigence with the life of his Son, rather than run the hazard of starving all the rest for want of bread, which could not possibly be had any other way. The reason why Jacob was so loth to part with his Son Benjamin, was not the tenderness of his Age (for though he is called the Lad, yet he was at this time thirty two years old, and the Father of ten Children, as appears afterwards by the lift of Jacob's Family which went down into Egypt) but he was for choice of him, because he supposed that his Brother Toleph was torn by wild Beafts, and so this the only Son that he had left by his best beloved Wife Rachel. who died in Child-bed of him. However, at the preffing instance of Judah, he consented to let him go. And to make a friend, if possible, of the Governor, he fent him a present of the best things which Canaan afforded. afforded, as Balm and Honey, Spices and Myrrh, Nuts and Almonds, with double Money to make good that which was return'd by mistake, as he supposed; and fo dismissed them with his Blessing, and hearty Prayer to God, to encline the Governor's Heart to

fend them all fafe home again.

A S foon as they were arrived in Egypt, and came into Joseph's presence, at the place where he kept his Office, he commanded his Steward to take them home, and provide a good entertainment, for they should dine with him. When they were brought into his house, they were struck with a fore apprehension, that they should all be made Slaves, upon pretence of having fraudulently detained their Money the last time. This they began, with much concern, to excuse to the Steward of Joseph's house. But he soon made them easie as to that matter, by telling them, that he had their money, and was fully fatisfied for their Corn; and that what they found in their Sacks was God's Bleffing to them, they were to esteem it as the return of his Providence. This he so expresfed, as that they might think it was miraculously put into their Sacks, though he was privy to the doing of it. Then he brought out Simeon to them. fetting him at full liberty, and they all converfed freely together, and made ready their Present which they had brought for the Governor, and which they offered to him in their Father's Name, as soon as he came home, proftrating themselves at the same time on the earth before him. This was a just accomplishment of that Vision which he had in his youth, that the Sun and Moon, and cleven Stars made their obeisance to him. For this homage was now actually paid him, by his Brethren in their own Persons, and

by his Father and the rest of the Family in a Pre-

THEN he directed his Steward to place his Brethren at the Table where they were to dine, in the order of their Age and Birth, and as they were used to sit at home; which caused them much to wonder how any one there could know them so well,

as to put them in this exact Order.

AFTER the Feast was ended, and the Brethren gone to rest, Joseph commanded his Steward to fill their Sacks with Corn, and return all their money, and put his filver Cup in the Sack's mouth of the youngest. And when next morning they had loaded, and were gone, he sends the same Steward after them, to charge them with having robbed him, and to bring them again, and claims the youngest, upon whom his Cup was found, for his Slave. This is an instance of foseph's fine wit and contrivance; for he did this to make an experiment of the Brethren's love towards Benjamin, and to see whether they would stand by him when he was accused of Thest, and in danger of Punishment; or leave him behind them, as a Malefactor, and return to their Father, and inform him how he had misbehaved himself. And it shows in what excellent command, Joseph had his Servants. For this Steward must in all probability have been in the Secret from the very first, that these were Fosaph's Brethren: otherwise we can hardly conceive how he could have done all that he did: and yet he carries it from first to last, as if he had known nothing of the matter, neither by Word nor Look discovering any thing of his Master's design.

THE Cup which was here earried off, is called the Cup whereby Joseph divined; which has given B 4 occasion occasion to various Speculations, what fort of Divining this should be. Grotius thinks it was a Cup which he ased in his Drink-offerings. But that cannot be, if he commonly drank in it at his Table; for facred vessels were never used but in the service of Religion, to which they were dedicated: and they were commonly locked up so safe, as not to be exposed to Theft. If there was any Divination, or finding out of things by the help of this Cup, 'tis a profound Secret to us, which we are not able to account for. But there is another construction in the margin of our Bibles, which gives a more natural and easie Sense. For the Hebrew word, which we render to divine, fignifies also to make an Experiment; and so the meaning may be (as Aben Ezra expounds this passage) 66 Should you not have confidered, that my Lord lets 46 this Cup go freely about his house, to try the honesty of those that eat and drink with him? And on now he has detected you by it, that after all your 46 Professions of being true men, you are quite otherwife: and have done foolishly in stealing a thing of this nature, which being in continual use, was soon " missed." This is an easie Sense of the words, and

generally approved of.

JOSE PH's design was certainly served by it, and he was well pleased to see the rest of his Brethren in such great concern for his Brother Benjamin. For upon the discovery of the Cup in his Sack, they all rent their Cloaths; and when Joseph declared that he would let all the rest of them return home with their Corn, and only keep him upon whom the Cup was found, Judah drew near, and after the lowest Obeisance, and most humble Address for leave to speak, he made a most moying Speech, in which he declares

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that this Son was so dear to his aged Father, as being the only remaining of two Brothers which he had by a beloved Wise, that he durst not return home without him; for he had perswaded his Father to let him come with them, and had undertaken for his safe return: which if he were not able to make good, he could expect nothing but to see his Father expire in the Pangs of inconsolable Sorrow, which was a sight that he was not able to bear: and therefore concludes with an earnest request, that he might be accepted in his Brother's stead, and purchase his liberty with his own slavery.

THESE tender points, enforced with a suitable address of the Speaker, wrought so powerfully upon Toseph, that he was not able to contain himself any longer, but melting into all the Expressions of kind Affection, he told them his name, that he was the very Joseph, whom they had fold into Egypt, and how wonderfully God had raised him in that Country. having made him as it were a Father to the King, Lord of his House, and Administrator of all his Affairs and Dominions. Withal he observed to them, how the Divine Providence had brought Good out of their Evil; and that his coming thither was not so much the effect of their selling him, as the hand of God, who had fent him thither before them, to provide for them, and their Flocks and Herds, and to fave their Lives by a great Deliverance. Then he charged them with a message to his Father, inviting him to come and gratifie his Eyes with the Grandeur of that Son whom he had lamented as dead, and to bring his Family and all that he had, and exchange the Famine which he suffered in Canaan for the Fatness of the Land of Egypt.

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AND thus Joseph's dreams were fully accomplished, in seeing himself exalted far above all the rest of his Family: and those his Brethren who once despised him, and vilished him with the name of idle Dreamer, and sold him for a Slave on purpose to prevent his Dignity and Superiority over them; now gladly recognize him for their Lord, and celebrate him as the happy instrument in God's hand of preserving not only them, but Millions of Lives in Egypt and the Countries round about.

IN all the various circumstances of his Life, he appears to have been a Man of great Serenity and Tranquillity of Mind, absolute Master of his Passions and Affections, neither apt to despair in a Dungeon. nor grow proud and haughty at the head of a splendid Court and flourishing Kingdom. He was a man of steady Virtue, of quick Apprehension, clear Judgment, dextrous and successful in performing whatever he took in hand, and of a Genius so apt to ascend, that whether he was a Prisoner, a Servant in a House, or a Ruler in a Kingdom, he was evermore Superior and head in all places. His Capacity for business of all forts was incomparably large; and his bodily Constitution strong and vigorous; otherwise he could never have attended, so much as he did in his own person, to the affairs of Egypt and several other Countries. His Aspect was both sweet and majestick, his way of speaking proper and agreeable, and his Mind full of Humanity and Inclinations to Beneficence; which was happy for him as well as for the People. and necessary qualifications for the man who was to fit at the helm of Affairs in those difficult times. What less could reconcile the Egyptians to the Government of a Foreigner, who had been fold for a

Slave among them, and make them so absolutely resign their Persons and Estates to his disposal, that they begg'd him to do whatever he thought sit, and had such a Love and Veneration for him, that they even Idolized him both living and dead.

70 SEPH was a noble instance of the share which the Divine Providence hath in the Government of the World. For he was brought to fave Pharaoh and his Kingdom, as well as Jacob and his Family, from perishing, by ways and means which at the beginning looked vastly wide of such an end, and yet upon a review appear to have been the most straight and direct way to it. For how could he have been fitted for the Government of Egypt, if he had not been educated many years in fuch a Family as Potiphar's; and what could have brought him an Alien into fuch a Family, if he had not been fold for a Slave? And though his Master's throwing him into a Jayl, seem'd to fet him at the greatest distance from any Dignity or Honour, yet by a chain of Providences it proved to him the shortest step to the Royal Presence: for by interpreting the Courtiers dreams there, he was called to Court to do the like service for the King: and his Advice about the King's affairs was fo wife, as recommended him to be fet immediately at the head of them.

IN short, we have that Aphorism exemplified in this History of Joseph, which the Psalmist teaches us, Psal. exiii. that God raiseth the Poor out of the dust, and listeth up the needy out of the dungeon; that he may set him with the Princes, even with the Princes of his people; and that other remark, that promotion cometh neither from East nor West, but from God alone, who setteth up one man, and pulleth down another: And

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that of St. Paul, that it is neither of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that giveth success.

LET this prevail with us all, to be very stedfast in our duties to God, esteeming him as the Fountain of all goodness, who ordereth all things in Heaven and in Earth, as it seems best to his infinite Wisdom. Let us be careful in the first place to recommend ourfelves to his favour, by offering up our Prayers and Thanksgivings to him, and doing all those things which he hath commanded, and affured us to be wellpleasing in his fight: and then he will give us so much Favour in the fight of men, as shall be most conducive to his Glory and our own welfare; and whatever Portion or Lot he shall assign us in the Kingdoms of this World, let us be content, assuredly knowing that he will crown all at last with making us Kings and Princes in his own Heavenly Kingdom, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, &c.





SERMON XXVIII.

On the Fourth Sunday in LENT.

EVENION G.

G E N. xlv. 5.

Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with your selves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you, to preserve life.

URPRISING was the discovery which Joseph made of himself to his brethren. He had hitherto carried it with the high state and grandeur of the Viceroy of Egypt.

and treated them with a sterner look and rougher usage than he would have shown to other men. And that for a very good reason. It was to try them how they stood affected towards their own family: for he knew by his own experience, that they had been very unnatural in this respect. But now having made a thorough and severe tryal of their affections, and hearing them speak such tender things of their father and brother Benjamin as he was sure came from their heart, and seeing them ready to ransom the latter from slavery even with their own lives and liberty, he was not able to contain himself any longer, but burst-

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ing out into a flood of tears, told them he was their

brother Joseph, whom they had fold into Egypt.

AT this word they were so astonished, that they had no power to make him any answer. To hear so great a man call himself their brother Joseph, raised such strange thoughts and terrible reslections in their minds, as quite confounded them: wherefore Joseph, to convince them that he spoke truth, and to confirm what he had said, repeated it very seriously, and sell into very samiliar and friendly discourse with them, whereof these words of my Text are a part: Be not grieved, nor angry with your selves, that ye sold me bither: for God did send me before you, to preserve life.

IN which words there are three things worthy our

observation.

I. JOSEPH's tender remission of the offence which his brethren had committed against him. Be not grieved, nor angry with your selves about it.

II. THE reason which he assigns for alleviating their grief: It was not you, but God who sent me bither.

III. THE good end which was served by his being fold into Egypt. God sent me before you to preserve life.

I. THE first thing we have to observe, is Joseph's kind remission of his brethren's offence, and his tender concern for them, lest they should be overwhelmed with too much grief and indignation at themselves for what they had done to him. It was natural for them to abhor themselves, to hang down their heads, to hide their faces, and not dare to look up, or speak to a brother whom they had so grossy injured; especially now, when they found him in such great and glorious Circumstances. He saw them sinking under a load of shame

shame and sear, remorse and sorrow for what was past, and endeavour'd to revive them and cheer up their spirits with assurances of his pardon and reconciliation, and with such arguments as might abate the edge and sting of their guilty resentments.

THIS free and hearty reconciliation was a proof of Joseph's excellent spirit, speaking him superior to all injuries, and endued with a goodness which could overcome the greatest evil. For he not only pardons his unnatural brethren, but sympathizes with them in the forrow which they conceived upon this occasion. and defires to make them easie both in their own minds, and with one another. For as here he exhorts them not to be too much grieved and vexed within themselves, so afterwards he charges them not to fall out with one another by the way, as they were returning home. He knew how apt they would be to lay the blame one upon another, as 'tis common in fuch cases: and certain it is, that some of them were more blameable than others. And therefore their brother, who was the fuffering party, and had most right to forbid quarrels upon his account, makes an act of oblivion. as I may fay, for them, and injoyns them to mention this business no more, nor, if it were possible, for much as to think of it.

HOW unlike to Joseph are the generality of offended brothers? of whom, scarce one in his condition but would have reasoned thus. These men are

- 'my brethren but by one of our Parents; and by their disaffection have been my constant enemies.
- While I was a child amongst them, they could
- e never afford me a kind look, or a good word; but
- fought all opportunities to cut me off from the
- family by death or banishment. They once resolved

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to murder me, and at last sold me for a slave. And

o now that I am advanced to the Government of

Egypt, contrary to their intentions and wishes, they

e seek to me for relief in this time of scarcity. But I

6 do not think my felf obliged to provide for any of

them, except my father and brother Benjamin. These

two I will fetch hither, and give them the fat of

the land of Egypt. For the rest, let them stay where

they are, and fare as they deserve.

acting upon such occasions: And they think they are bound, by the rules of prudence and justice, to this kind of dealing. But Joseph shews that he had a great measure of the Spirit of God in him, inasmuch as he acted by those supernatural dictates which say, If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you. Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. Recompense to no manevil for evil; but always overcome evil with good. These Rules which were asterwards published in the book of the divine Law, were then written in Joseph's heart; by virtue of which he extended his compassion and beneficence to the worst as well as to the best of his brethren.

BUT when Joseph exhorts his brethren not to be troubled in their minds, nor to reflect upon one another for what they had done against him, This is not intended to persuade them that they had committed no offence, or that they had nothing to repent of before God upon his account. He speaks more plainly and fully afterwards, chap. L. when, after their father's death and burial, they sent to him, and waited on him, confessing their trespass against him, and asking his forgiveness in the name and for the sake of their

their deceased Father. He answered them, As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not; I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

W E see then, that Joseph's pardoning his brethren and speaking comfortably to them, did not persuade them to conclude that they had done no evil. No, they were sensible of it, and confest it, seventeen years after he had spoke to them in the words of my Text. And indeed it would be very disingenuous in any of us, when we have offended God or man, to conclude that we are innocent, because they have pardoned us. It is enough for us, that we are restored to their favour, and excused from the punishment we had deserved. But if we were not always sensible of our offence, and ready upon all proper occasions to acknowledge it, we should be utterly unworthy of any pardon.

II. WE come now in the fecond place to consider the reason which Joseph assigns for alleviating his brethren's grief and anger at themselves, for what they had done against him. It was not you, says he, but God who fent me bither. This is strictly true. His brethren fold him to the Ishmaelites, to dispose of him as the purchasers pleased: whether in Egypt, or in any other Country, it was all one to them. Their business was to fend him far enough from their own family, without troubling themselves to think what should become of him. But God, who had fore-ordained that Egypt should be the place of his advancement, and scene of his great actions, conducted all the changes and chances of his life to the accom-VOL. II. plishment

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World in an infinite number of events which happen every day, to convince us that he reigns over every Creature, and to manifest the all-sufficiency of his

Power, Wisdom, and Goodness.

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If, GOD over-rules the evil actions of men, fo as to demonstrate his Power and Providence in the government of the World. There is not any work done by any man living, but God orders and directs the iffue of it, so as to turn it to the benefit or hurt of Mankind, as he in his just judgment sees most reafonable and expedient. I confess, God is not the author of most things which are done by men, for they are contrary to his Will and Commandment; and he can never contradict himself. He has given us a freedom of will, by virtue of which we do good or evil, according as our Inclinations lead us: and because our Inclinations are generally finful, therefore we chuse to do that which for the most part is evil. which the impulsive Will of God, i. e. his Spirit, can have no share. But let us do what we will, I fay the issue and event of our doings is in the hands of God, who directs them, according to Mens demerits, for the benefit or punishment of the World. This over-ruling Power is so much the prerogative of God, that we shall not only fail of hindering his Will, in the government of the World, but we shall be fure directly to advance it, even then when we feem to act most contrary to it. For a proof of this, we need feek no farther than the case here before us. Foseph's brethren understanding that he had dreams which prognosticated his superiority over them, were resolved to frustrate the accomplishment of these dreams, by disposing of the dreamer in such a manner as should render the event impossible. And first they proposed to kill him out-right: But this being opposed by some of them as too horrid, they agreed presently to cast him into a deep pit, out of which he could never rise again. This done, a company of Arabian Merchants came up at that instant: whereupon a thought was started by one of them, which presently took with the rest, that they would sell him for a slave to these Merchants; so out of the pit they hoist him, and send him away by these Arabians to Egypt, not doubting but that hereby they had effectually cut him off from ever reigning over them.

NOW all this while they were doing the very thing which they most earnestly strove to prevent. For God had decreed that Joseph's superiority over his brethren should be attained in Egypt, to which they could not have contributed more directly, than they did by sending him thither at the time and in the way before related.

HEREIN is manifested the sovereign Power of God, how easily he changes Mens purposes, to make them comply with his decrees. He would not suffer these men to kill their brother out-right, nor to starve him in a pit, tho' they had resolved upon both; but he permitted them to sell him into Egypt, as being a way entirely subservient to the divine Will.

as to magnifie his own Wisdom in the government of the World. Joseph's brethren took the most effectual course, in all human probability, to depress him so low, that he should have always been the foot and not the head of his Family. If any one of them who had been his friend more than the rest, had undertaken to

have comforted him at the fale with faying, Be content, child, to go into Egypt, for this is the readiest way for you to become the greatest Man there; ' the rest would have certainly laughed him to fcorn, and would have interpreted fuch a faying as an abusive mockery, as well knowing that this was the most unlikely way in the world to any high station. And yet when we look upon the chain of causes which led to it, we must confess it all runs very natural and easie. But God alone could foresee this. He who orders all things, could know, that it was proper for Joseph to live as a servant in a great house, that he might be bred up in the knowledge of the affairs of Egypt; that he should be cast into the same Prison with the King's Butler, in order to be called to Court by him; that he should have more wisdom than all the Magicians of Egypt, to be able to explain the King's dreams which prognosticated a Famine; and that he should have the best abilities of any man in the Nation, to govern it well in such a great exigence. All this could be known to him only who knows all things: and his Wisdom is admirable in ordering it, and bringing it to pass. No other method that we can conceive, would have been comparable to this of the divine Occonomy.

3dly, GOD's over-ruling the evil actions of men, very much illustrates his Goodness in the government of the World. Intolerable would be the misery of this present state of things, if the works of wicked Men and Devils were always to have their natural effect and issue. No body who knows the World can deny, but that the most civilized parts of it are much pestered with a seed of evil-doers, who make no scruple to subvert and ruin their honest, innocent Neigh-

bours, whether by fecret fraud or open violence, as oft as they can find opportunity to do it with fafety to themselves. The destructive passions which infected Joseph's brethren, boil in the hearts of abundance of people, who are only restrained by sear from letting them loofe to the confusion of all society. What murders, robberies, cheats, and innumerable abuses would be committed more than now are, did not God by a miraculous good Providence often defeat the authors, before their works of darkness were ripe for execution; and at other times, where Sin has been finished, how strangely has it brought forth death to the Actors in their greatest security, when they have faid, No eye bath feen us! I fay, it is the Goodness of God to bring to light the hidden things of darkness, before they are put in practice, in order to prevent their mischiefs; and when they are not prevented, to pursue, find out, and punish the wicked Instruments, that others may hear, and fear, and do no more so wickedly. The providential discoveries of Murderers, Robbers, and other enemies of mankind, are absolutely needful to supply the defects of human fagacity and penetration. For a crafty Malefactor will often triumph over his Judge and Jury, as well knowing that all the evidence which can be brought against him, will not be able to convict him. But when this criminal is possessed with an apprehension, grounded upon unquestionable testimonies, that God's Judgments find out those sinners who escape the sentence of human Tribunals, this apprehension is always uppermost in his thoughts, and fills his eyes with apparitions, and his ears with voices which fummon him to the Judgment of God. The histories of fuch Judgments restrain some from committing enormities :

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enormities; and the experience of them keeps back others who have entred, from proceeding in them. And so God turns the gall of a guilty Conscience, into an antidote against sin. Many a man, who was once in a spiritual Lethargy, hath been awakened by some great offence to look about him, to see his weakness, and to stand upon his guard the whole remaining part of his life. I am very much of opinion that Joseph's brethren, after they had fold him, became better Men. Before this, they had but a bad character, an evil report, as the Scripture informs us: but afterwards we hear no evil of them. On the contrary, we may conclude from their History, that they recovered a true temper, and just affection for all their Family. This is the Goodness of God, who delighteth not in the death of a finner, but turns the falls of some Men into an occasion of their firmer standing for the time to come. Which brings me to the

HIId THING I proposed to observe, viz. The good end which was served by Joseph's being sold into Egypt; God sent him thither before the rest of his family, to preserve their lives. This shows that God's thoughts are not as Man's thoughts, nor his ways like our ways. In fuch transactions with the World as this, we are commonly fet on work by some carnal lust or irregular passion, and are so far from aiming at the Glory of God, or the welfare of our Brethren in what we do. that we grofly postpone them, and facrifice them to the pleasure of our own vicious lust. But he whose alone property and power it is, to bring good out of evil, so orders the unruly wills of finful men, as to make them subservient to the fulfilling of his decrees, when they least intend it. Joseph's brethren, when they fold him, had no other view but to gratifie their fplcen

spleen in punishing him, and to disappoint the ambition of an assuming youth, as they looked upon him to be, who begun thus early to think of being their Master. But God's design was to make him a Master indeed, even a Father to Pharaoh, and Lord of all Egypt. He knew that Joseph was the most capable Man in the World, not only to soresee a Famine, but to provide against it, and by his plentiful provisions to save the lives of many People, and among the rest, of his own Family. What a missortune had it been to them all, if so useful a Man had been cut off, before he had sinished this great work! They who once despised and hated him, now love and admire him: they willingly bow to his sovereignty over them, and rejoice in it, as the work of God for the preservation of their lives.

HOW happy is it for us, that God governs the World! How many bleffings should we deprive our selves of, if we were left to the full execution of our own wills, or the conduct of our own narrow views and erroneous judgment! Alas, if every man were to chuse for himself, and to have his own particular defires sulfilled, there would be neither summer nor winter, seed-time nor harvest; there would be all masters and no servants, all rich and no poor, all would live in ease and pleasure, and none would fatigue himself with labour, or run any hazard, and so there would be an end of Trade and Commerce, mutual succour and assistance, and consequently of the very Life and Being of mankind.

WE are at best but children in understanding, and commonly suffer that share of reason we are owners of, to be born down and controuled by our Passions. What is the difference between childhood and manhood? In both states our great concern is to please

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our selves. In our advanced years, we do not correct our childish appetites, but only vary and enlarge their objects, and are so much worse than we were before, that we act more knowingly against the Laws of Religion and Reason. Who knows not the difference between Virtue and Vice, and that it is much better for him to mortifie his vicious inclinations than to indulge them? And yet how few practife according to this knowledge! Most men satisfie themselves with a comparative Virtue. One thinks himself virtuous. because he abstains from reigning sensualities: but the reason of his abstinence is, because he has no appetite to them, or they do not fall in with his way of life and business. He is a sober man, because he has no temptation to be otherwise; his constitution or his circumstances oblige him to be so: But he suffers himfelf to be captivated by spiritual Sins; by pride, envy, wrath, hatred, cruel and unmerciful affections. He makes his very temperance an occasion of casting uncharitable reflections upon others: He will not spare to call the very Minister of Religion a glutton and drunkard, a friend of publicans and finners, if he prove not altogether as abstemious as himself. Happy is it therefore for mankind that God governs the World, that he is the Judge of all men, that he will render to every man according to his works.

THE application I would make of all this, is, to perswade men to conform themselves entirely to the Will of God, both as it is revealed by his Word, and exercised by his Providence. For who ever resisted his Will with any good success? His Precepts are our best direction to happiness, and his Providence the best security of our life, and health, and freedom from evil. While Joseph's brethren were violating the most

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facred laws of piety and natural affection, in order to prevent his superiority over them, they were fighting against the greatest temporal Blessings that ever beself them in the course of their lives. Even so when we oppose God in the government of the World, and break thro' his Laws to come at those things which we think are best for us; when we accuse the dispensations of his Providence by murmuring and repining at them, and are peevish and discontented under any tryal which he is pleased to bring upon us, we forsake the only way of our deliverance, and run into those by-ways which, without his undeserved good-

ness, must lead us to inevitable perdition.

LET us then be punctual in the performance of our duties to God and the World, using that reasonable care, industry, and thriftiness which the laws of piety and prudence require of us, and let us trust him with the disposal of our lives and fortunes. He has many Josephs at command, many instruments whereby he can work our deliverance out of the most dangerous and deplorable Circumstances. Why should we be afraid to trust that God who first inspired us with the breath of life, and in whom we still continue to live, move, and have our being? Only let us lay a good foundation of our Faith: let us render him that obedience, honour, and love which is due to him; let us feek his Kingdom and Righteousness in the first place, and then we may depend upon his fatherly goodness, that he will give us all things needful for the body, according to the promise of Christ our Lord, in whom he hath chosen us, with whom he will give us food convenient for us, To whom with the Father, &c.



SERMON XXIX.

On the Fifth Sunday in LENT.

MORNING.

E X O D. iii. 9, 10.

Now therefore behold, the cry of the Children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the Children of Israel out of Egypt.

The fes, is denominated in the original Hebrew from the first words of it: but the Greek Interpreters have named it Exodus, which signifies a going forth, because it contains the History of the Israelites going forth out of Egypt, and their Travels thence towards the Land of Canaan. For this their Departure there were two reasons: one was the Promise of God to their Fathers, that he would give them the possession of the Land of Canaan, when the iniquity of the Amorites, the old Inhabitants, should be full, which was about this time.

time. The other was, the great change which they found in the affections of the Egyptians towards them, which happened through length of time and change of Governors. Joseph indeed had served four Kings, viz. Mephramuthofis, Thmofis, Amenophis and Orus; which are all called Pharaoh; this was the common name of the Egyptian Kings, and the other were proper and diftinguishing names. The whole time of his Administration amounted to the sum of fourscore years. But when he and that generation were all dead, the royal Family of Egypt was changed; but not presently, I think; there was a quick succession of three or four short-lived Kings, according to the Chronicle of Manetho the Egyptian priest; then came Ramesses Miamun who reigned fixty fix years. He observing the unusual increase and multiplication of the people of Israel, was afraid lest they should grow too strong for the Egyptians, and that when any War should happen to break out, they should join themselves to the adverse party: which they might be provoked to do, because the Egyptians now detained them against their will, and used them as flaves and prisoners. Wherefore this King, having advised with his Counsellors, laid heavy burdens of drudgery upon the Ifraelites, to wear out their bodies and depress their minds; and taking much delight in building, he employed them to make bricks for that purpose. Fosephus the Historian says, they built the famous Pyramids of Egypt; but I suppose he wrote this as a probable conjecture, and had never been there to fee them. For those who have feen them and examined them throughout, and are men of unquestioned veracity, assure us that the pyramids are all built of huge maffy stones. However there is good

good reason to believe what this Historian adds, that the Israelites were obliged to build many Cities, and encompass them with Walls. The holy Text informs us, that they built Ramesses and Pithom, Cities which were so called after the names of the then reigning King and Queen. And 'tis very probable, what Josephus fays farther, that the Israelites cut the Nile into divers trenches, and built many banks for regulating the Inundations of that River; and were compell'd, no doubt, as the Scripture intimates, to fow their Masters Fields and gather in their Harvest. All which Services the Egyptians exacted of them with the most tyrannical Rigour, and appointed Task-masters to follow them, and beat them without mercy, if they did not perform all the unconscionable Task which they required of them. This Usage being daily repeated, rendered their lives bitter, and their servitude intolerable.

IN the fixth year of the reign of this new King Ramesses Miamun, Moses was born. He was the Son of Amram, of the Tribe of Levi, and born in Zoan, the royal City, and place of the King's Residence. His Parents had much ado to preserve him from being destroy'd, by virtue of a murderous Edict which the King had published some time before his birth, commanding that all the male Infants of the Hebrews. which should be born from that time forward, should be thrown into the Nile and drowned. And if any one shall object, that some of the Children sure must be carried a great way to be cast into the River, he must know that the Nile was divided into a great many Sluices and Rivulets, for the more commodious watering all the Land of Egypt. The occasion of this Edict was a Prophecy, which was given out by one of the King's

King's wife men, "That a Hebrew child was coming in-" to the world, who if he should attain to man's estate, " would prove an instrument of much affliction to the " Egyptians, and work the deliverance of his own " people and nation of Israel." To prevent this, the Egyptian King took much the same course as Herod did afterwards to cut off the Messiah in his Cradle. This severe Law obliged his Parents to be very vigilant to preserve him from the hands of the destroyer. With difficulty they concealed him at home for three months. But when the Inquisitors visited them so often, that the Child was in daily danger of being discovered, Jochabed his mother made a little wicker Basket or Ark, and smeared it over with Pitch to keep out the Water, but plaister'd it within, that it might not stick to the Child, and then put him into it, and laid it in the Flags by the River's brink, and very probably fasten'd it to something with a Cord, that it might not be carried away with the Stream.

NOW that which induced his Mother to commit him to the Waters in this manner, was, I suppose, this consideration, that if it should be discovered that she had been lately brought to bed of a male Child, and she should be strictly examined about it, she might be able truly to affirm, that she had cast him into the River.

HOWEVER she set somebody or other to have an eye continually upon him, though they might seem to be imployed about other business, and no doubt took care of him her self at night, if his deliverance thence did not presently happen; which was thus. One time as his Sister Miriam, who is often mentioned afterwards, was upon the watch, Thermutis, the King's

daughter, came with her maids to the River to wash her felf; which she might very conveniently do: for Zoan, the royal City, was fituate upon that channel of the Nile which ran through Goshen, and the King's Palace and Gardens, we may justly presume, stood upon the bank of the River, as is usual in such Situations; and in the Garden were accommodations for bathing in the River, so necessary in hot Countries. Thermutis here quickly spied the little Ark floating among the Flags, and fent one of her maids to fetch it; which she might easily do, it being in shallow water, near the brink of the River. The Princess opening it, and seeing the child, was moved with his present circumstances to take him into her protection. Hereupon his Sister, observing the favourable opportunity, stept in, and offered her service to call a Nurse; which being ordered to do, she ran home and fetched Jochabed, and so restored her little Brother to his own Mother. This shews that Moles was born in the royal City of Zoan: though the Scripture doth not mention it, yet it must needs be fo; for otherwise the business of nursing could not have been transacted between the Princess and the Mother so speedily as is here related.

AND here we see a concourse of Events very happy and savourable to Moses. For by being taken into the care and protection of the Princess, he was secured of a safe and honourable Education, and hence he became well instructed in all the liberal and political Arts of the Egyptians; and saw the methods both of Military Discipline and Civil Government. And being settled for Nursing and Diet in his own Parents house, where I doubt not he resided most of the first forty years of his life, 'till his slight into Midian, there being

being such a vast difference between the Hebrews and Egyptians in matters of Diet; this gave him an opportunity to be thoroughly grounded and established in the Religion of his Ancestors, in the Knowledge and Worship of the God of Israel.

Was an instance of his Zeal for God and his Brethren. He had often observed the insufferable oppressions which the Egyptians heaped upon the Israelites, and wished for nothing so much as a power to relieve them, which he began to attempt when he was forty years of age; for happening one day to be near at hand, when an Egyptian Task-master was barbarously beating one of the same Tribe and Lineage with Moses, he stept in to his succour, and seeing no body within view to question him for it, he slew the Egyptian.

THIS indeed is to be reckoned amongst those Acts of Scripture Heroes, which are not intended for our imitation. Moses was excited to do this by a special impulse of the divine Spirit, otherwise he could not have justified the doing of it to God and his own Conscience. St. Stephen (Acts vii.) says this Fact was an argument that God intended to deliver Ifrael out of Egypt by the hand of Moses, and that he thought they would have so understood it, though they understood it not. Maimonides, speaking of the extraordinary Zeal wherewith God fometimes moves and animates his Servants to some unusual Enterprize, which his service requires, reckons Moses amongst others, as an instance of it. 6 Moses (fays he) was endued with this Power, by the impulse of which he flew the Egyptian, and checked him who unjustly ftrove with one of his Brethren.' There is a very ancient Egyptian without any weapon, or blow, but merely by the word of his Mouth, pronouncing him dead in the name of God, just as St. Peter afterwards slew

Ananias and Sapphira.

NO W though Moses hoped that this fact of his was concealed, yet he quickly found it was published abroad, perhaps by that very Jew whom he rescued, and that the King had heard of it, and had given orders that he should be apprehended and punished for it. To prevent which he withdrew and fled into Midian, a Territory of Arabia Petraa, so named of one of the Sons of Abraham by Keturah, and inhabited by his Descendants, and therefore the more likely to be agreeable to him, both in religion and matters of civil life. Here he was hospitably entertained in the Family of Jethro, one of the chief men of the Country, who gave him his Daughter to wife, and imployed him in seeding his Cattle, which was the great business of those Countries.

IN this state of private life, Moses continued forty years, which space of time he passes over almost in silence. We cannot doubt but that he was a shining example of piety and virtue in many notable instances, though his modesty has recorded none of

them.

SOME think that in this retirement he wrote the Book of Job, to administer comfort to his afflicted Brethren, by the example of that holy man's refignation to God under his sufferings; and likewise the Book of Genesis, that they might the better understand the promise which God had made of old to give them the Land of Canaan, and that the time was now drawing on apace, when this promise should be suffilled.

fulfilled. This was a great imployment, especially if Moses wrote many copies of these Books for the use of the Israelites, which 'tis probable he did, that they might in some measure supply his place, during his absence from them.

ABOUT the mid-time of his sojourning in Midian, Pharach, whose proper name was Ramesses Miamun, as we noted before, died in the fixty seventh year of his reign, and his fon Amenophis reigned in his stead. But the Israelites were so far from being eased of their burdens by the death of their old oppressor, that they quickly found they had only exchanged a wolf for a tyger; The Successor's care was to make his little finger as heavy as his Father's loyns. This aggravation of Tyranny exasperated the cries and groans of the afflicted, which pierced the ears of their God with fuch importunity, that he determined to visit them with his Salvation; and remembring his Covenant with their Fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he looked upon these their posterity with bowels of compassion, and resolved to work their deliverance out of Egypt, which he fet about in the following manner.

MOSES, attending the care of his Father-in-law's flocks in Arabia, led them to the backfide, or rather to the inner-parts of the defert, there being better pasture than in the place where he was before, and came to Horeb or Sinai, which he calls the Mountain of God, perhaps by anticipation, because of the wonderful appearances of the Divine Majesty, and revelation of his Law which he made afterwards from that Mountain. Though Jasephus says, the pasturage hereabout was very rich and good, by reason that the Shepherds of those parts durst not lead their Vol. II.

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flocks thither to graze it, in regard of an opinion which prevailed amongst them, that God inhabited that Mountain. Moses found it so indeed: for as he was feeding here, he was furprized with an unufual light, which seemed like a flame of fire burning in a bush; but yet so as that the bush was not consumed, nor the green leaves and flowers any ways changed by it. Moses observing with much wonder this sudden eruption of Flame from an unknown cause, and that nothing which it touched was scorched by it, stept to it to examine more perfectly the meaning of it. And as he was approaching, he heard a plain articulate Voice proceeding out of the Bush, which called him by his name, and commanded him to keep his distance, and to put off bis shoes, because the place where he flood was holy ground. This intimated, that the Brightness which he saw, was the Divine Glory, and that the more immediate presence of God had consecrated the place, which therefore demanded an awful regard to be paid to it. The like demand of Reverence was made upon Joshua aftewards, Jos. v. by a Divine Person which appeared to him. And certain it is, that the Priests officiated bare-foot in the Temple at Jerusalem; into which they were forbidden to enter with their shoes on, lest they should defile it with the dirt which commonly cleaves to them. Some think the Patriarchs used this reverence in their publick worship, and transmitted it to posterity by an universal Tradition; for even the Mahometans and other Nations observe it at this day.

MOSES yielding obedience to the Heavenly Voice, it presently assured him, that he who talked with him, was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and

Facob,

Jacob, that he had a perfect and most compassionate sense of the sufferings of their posterity in Egypt, that he had heard their cry, and was come down to deliver them from their flavery and task-masters, and to put them in possession of the Land of Canaan, which he had often promised them. Gome now therefore (fays he) I will fend thee back to Pharaoh, that thou mayst bring forth my people, the Children of Israel, out of Egypt. Moses (says Josephus) was ravished at what he had feen and heard: Though his Answers to the divine Command are such, as seem to speak his aversion to the work which was injoyned him. But several of the ancient Fathers impute this seeming backwardness to his great Modesty, Humility, and a deep sense which he had of his own Infirmities; of which the wisest and best men are far more sensible than other Persons. Most of his seeming objections may be fairly interpreted as addresses to God to affift him, and help his Infirmities. if he had said, Lord, I distrust not thy power, but highly reverence it, as knowing how much it hath been imparted to others before me. Nevertheless I am in some doubt, how I, who have onot been used to speak in publick, and have no ' military Power or Army to command, shall be able to persuade my Brethren to forsake the Country where they are now settled, and to follow me in hopes of bettering their condition. And though I should persuade my Brethren to hearken to me, yet how shall I prevail with Pharaob and the Egyptians to part with a s people, whose labours contribute so much to their ease, and the encrease of their Goods and Riches?"

In answer to all which Doubts and Scruples, God affures Moses that he will be with him in this Undertaking, that he will confer upon him the faculty of persuasive Speaking, that he will endue him with the power to work mighty Signs and Wonders, of which he gives him immediate Specimens in the supernatural change of his Staff, and of his Hand. Then he commands him to take Aaron his elder Brother, who was a Man of good Elocution, for his affiftant. Thus God having fatisfied the demands of Moses, and inspired him with a Spirit of Wisdom, Conduct, and Resolution equal to the work to which he appointed him, he dismissed him for the present. Moses with great alacrity took his leave of his Father-in-law, and made himself ready to go down into Egypt.

A ND thus we have taken a view of the grievous Oppressions under which the Israelites groan'd in their bondage to the Egyptians, and the first motions and overtures which were made towards their Deliverance. We have heard that Oppression is a crying Sin, and arms the hands of divine Justice to take vengeance of the Oppressors. Pharaoh and his Officers, in their Consultations how they might reduce the Israelites to a mean condition, say, Let us deal wisely with them. Tyrannical Superiors/treat not their Dependants by the Laws of Justice and Humanity, but make their own Pleasure and Interest the Rule of their Dealings with them, and think themselves accountable to none, how they dispose of the Lives and Fortunes of those who are in a state of absolute subjection under them. But there is a supreme Lord and Master in Heaven, who hears

the cause of such poor helpless Sufferers, and circumvents the politick Oppressors with their own Craftiness. The more the Egyptians studied to diminish, the more God encreased the number of the Israelites, and their Flocks and Herds were proportionably augmented. Pharaoh makes a Law to strangle Moses in the very birth, and sends out his Messengers to fetch him out of his Cradle, and throw him into the River. But the all-wife God so baffled and befooled all this Policy, that he placed Moses in the arms of Pharaoh's own Daughter, and ordered him his education in the royal Court, in the very face of that King who had fought to destroy him. This is an admonition to all Oppressors and wrongful dealers, to shew them the vanity of proposing to enrich and strengthen themselves by unjustly invading the Lives, Estates, or Labours of other men; for whatever earthly power is on their fide, the power of Heaven is certainly against them, and will make them fall by those unrighteous ways, which they take for their establishment.

lation for the Oppressed: That they can engage an invincible hand to vindicate their Cause, if they truly turn to God, pour out their Supplications before him, trust in him, and patiently wait for his Salvation. For God is full of Compassion, he delights to shew Mercy and Loving-kindness, to raise up those that are down, to release the innocent Prisoner, and break the yoke of the proud and haughty from off the neck of his Servants. And when he is pleased to do this, who shall hinder him? All Egypt could not hinder Israel from D 3

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thriving among them, though they had an army of Task-masters and Searchers to plunder and destroy them. All Egypt could not drown Moses at three months old, though one of their Chiess met with him even upon the River.

THIS is a noble argument to encline us to fear God and obey him, against all the world; and to persuade us to deal justly, and shew mercy to all those whom Providence throws in our way, and commits to our Power and Disposal; as considering that by so doing we imitate God, and obtain a special Title to his Favour. It was his repeated Injunction to the Israelites, that when they were settled in Canaan, they should deal kindly with all Strangers and Sojourners among them, considering and remembring their former State, that they also had been Strangers in the land of Egypt.

TO conclude; we see how mindful God is of his Promise, and how punctual in the Performance of it. He had promised sour hundred years ago to give Israel the Land of Canaan; and that time is now expired. But when was Israel in so unlikely a condition to obtain it, as at the Expiration of this Term, when they most groaned under their Egyptian. Servitude? Why this is a Season most suitable for God to magnify his Wisdom and Power in making good his Promise. When there is no help in Man, then is the arm of the Lord most easily seen, and the work most confessedly to be ascribed to him. Let this confirm us in the saith of our eternal Redemption, of which this Deliverance from Egypt was a figure. Let us conclude from hence, that when our burden

is great, and our Religion oppressed by the over-slowing of all Impieties which are most contrary to it, and Patience is much tried, and Hope almost ashamed, then our spiritual Moses, our great Prophet like unto him shall appear, as he did, the second time to our Salvation, and deliver us out of this our Egyptian Servitude by a glorious Resurrection, and Ascension into our Heavenly Canaan, which he has promised us, and secured for us, by now living and reigning there in our Nature, at the right hand of the Father, in the Unity of the Holy Spirit, one God world without end.



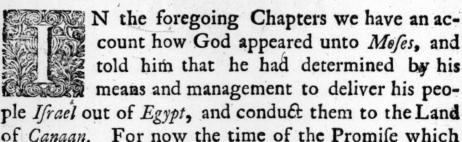


SERMON XXX.

On the Fifth Sunday in LENT: EVENING.

E X O D. v. 1, 2.

And afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a Feast unto me in the Wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.



ple Israel out of Egypt, and conduct them to the Land of Canaan. For now the time of the Promise which God had made to Abraham, Gen. xv. that he would work this deliverance, was expired. Thy seed, says he, shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them four hundred years. Which years are to be reckoned from the time that God's Promise was made to Abraham, who himself, and Isaac his Son, so journed in Egypt, and not from the descent of Jacob with his samily

family thither. For from that descent to this deliverance, Chronologers reckon but two hundred and fifteen years, which they make out thus, viz. Fifty six of the Life of Cohath the Son of Levi, seventy nine of the Life of Amram, Cohath's Son, and eighty of the Life of Moses the Son of Amram.

BUT that which determines Israel's deliverance to this particular period, is that other part of the Promise which God made to Abraham, Gen. xv. that his feed should come out of Egypt in the fourth Generation, which was now: for Moses was the great grand-child of the Patriarch Levi. Him therefore God instructs how to go about this work. 'Go, fays he, and take Aaron thy elder Brother with thee, and gather together the Elders of Israel, and certifie them, that the God of your Fathers hath seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them, and hath heard the cry of their sufferings under their task-masters, and hath fent you to bring them forth out of Egypt, unto the I land of Canaan, which he sware to your Fathers, that he would give them. And because Moses was afraid that the Elders would not believe him upon his bare word, God enabled him to work miracles for their full conviction, which are the first works of that kind that ever were wrought in the World.

WHEN Moses and Aaron had convinced the Elders, that God had given them the Commission aforesaid, then, by the divine appointment, they went all together to the King of Egypt, and delivered their message to him, and received such answer as is related in the words of my Text.

THEY demanded, in the name of the God of the Hebrews, leave for them and their people to go three days journey into the Wilderness of Arabia, to offer sacrifice

facrifice, and hold a feast unto the Lord their God. The King answered them, that he knew nothing of their God, neither would he grant any such leave as they desired.

UPON which words, feveral queries and doubts

will arise. As,

1 ft, WHY did they ask leave to go but three days journey into the Wilderness, when their design was to go quite away, and never return more? The reason was, because they had God's express orders to ask no more at first. He that knew the King's heart, foresaw that he would not permit them to go thus far, for a good while, till he and his Egyptians had fmarted severely for the refusal, and had been wasted by many prodigious calamities and judgments: And that then at last they would even thrust them out. and be glad to be rid of them for ever. So that there was no need to ask any more at the first than a three days journey for facrifice: which was a modest request. It would have been thought harsh and unreasonable to have asked all that they desired and intended, at their very first application. To have told the King that they were all going to leave him upon fuch short warning, might have been some excuse for his peremptory denial.

at this particular time? I answer; Their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob offered sacrifice to God; the last particularly sacrificed at Beersbeha, when he was upon his journey towards Egypt. Whence I conclude it to be highly probable, that their posterity in Egypt kept up the same custom, while the Kings were favourable to them, and went out yearly, and held a feast and sacrifice in the way and manner which they

now petition for. I confess this is but a conjecture. there being nothing faid of it in the facred History. But we know this history is so very short, that it takes no notice how they lived in Egypt, till towards the latter end of their fojourning there, when by the tyranny and jealousie of strange Kings, they fell under grievous oppression, and thenceforth they were certainly restrained from meeting together in such large assemblies, as being thought dangerous to the Government, which had now given them cause of discontent, by their hard usage of them. But in former time when they were treated as friends, 'tis very likely they were allowed to observe the rites of their own religion, and to hold fuch a general affembly as is here mentioned. However, what they fay here is very true, that God had appeared to them, and demanded fuch a facrifice of them: which was ground enough for them to apply to the King for leave to offer it. And they might well express their fears left fome mark of the divine wrath should light upon them, if they neglected it. For men of all religions were fenfible, that God would not excuse them for what he commanded in such an extraordinary manner, 'till they had performed it.

adly, WHY do they ask to go out into the Wilderness to offer this sacrifice? Moses gives the reason of this, Chap. viii. 25. where when Pharaoh bids them sacrifice in the land where they were (in Goshen) without going any farther: Moses answers, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God. Lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? This place is by several Interpreters paraphrased thus: We must sacrifice to our God

God oxen, sheep, and goats, which the Egyptians worship and adore: and that would be such an abominable impiety in their account, as would prowoke them to fall upon us with the utmost fury.' Now though there was a time when the Egyptians idolized these animals, as Greek and Latin writers inform us, yet their superstition did not grow to this height till some hundred years after this: For Herodotus, who lived many ages after Moses, and travelled in Egypt, affures us, that oxen and calves which had fuch marks whereby the Priests judged them to be clean, were facrificed all over Egypt.' Though he confesses they spared their kine in honour of Isis, whom they painted with horns, and fancied to be once turned into that beaft. As for other creatures, they were divided in their esteem of them: for in some places they abstained from sheep, and sacrificed goats: others, on the contrary, spared their goats and facrificed their sheep. But these distinctions came in long after the days of Moles; in whose time we may allow, that the Egyptians were of the same opinion with all mankind, that these animals might be used in religious facrifices; only they were so addicted to their own ways and rites of facrificing, that they could not endure to see this religious act performed by any but themselves.

THAT the Egyptians, before the days of Moses, had separated themselves from other people by many peculiar customs, appears from the account of the entertainment which Joseph made for his Brethren. At which though several Egyptians were present, yet they did not eat at the same table with them, but had their dinner prepared in their own way, and eat it by themselves: because, says he, the Egyptians might not eat bread

bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination to them. And afterwards Joseph instructed his Brethren to tell the King, that they were all brought up to feed cattle, that so he might place them in the land of Goshen, because shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians. And so they lived separately for a while, though afterwards the two people were much mingled, as appears from this and other chapters of Exodus. Whence we conclude, that by degrees they had conquered their old prejudices in matters of common life: Indeed they could not otherwise have the Israelites about them, so as to make use of their service both in cities and fields. But as for their Sacrifices, they would not endure the fight of them, as we heard before; and therefore it was proper for Moses and the Elders to beg leave to go at some distance upon this occasion.

THE reigning King, who was a great oppressor of the Israelites, suspected that their plausible request about facrificing, was used only to cover a farther defign which they had in agitation. There had been a current prophecy in his predecessor's days, that a Hebrew child was coming into the World, who should deliver Israelout of Egypt. To prevent which, the Egyptian King took the same method as Herod used afterwards, commanding that all the male-children of the Jews, which should be born within such a time, should be instantly destroyed. This great occurrence could not be unknown to his present successor. And he must needs know a great deal more than this. The records of Egypt were not so ill kept, as that he could be ignorant of the history of Joseph, and upon what occasion his Father's house came and settled in Egypt; and how they worshipped that God who had enabled

Joseph to interpret the King's dreams, and had raised him to be his Viceroy, and had promised about this time to give them the land of Canaan for their Inheritance. And therefore when this King fays, he knew not that Lord in whose name they petitioned him. he means, that he had never heard that name of God by which they called him in their language; and though they presently explain themselves, that they mean the God of the Hebrews, of whom he could not be wholly ignorant, yet he professed no obedience to him, but the contrary: he was persuaded that the Gods which he worshipped were superior to the God of Israel, and in this confidence he declares that he will not give them leave to go and facrifice to him.

THUS far in general of God's message to Pharach, and his answer; let us now compare them together a little more strictly, and then we shall see how reasonable the request, how unreasonable the refulal.

If, THE request was enforced with divine authority; Thus faith the Lord God of Ifrael. Suppose this had not been true, yet it should not have been answered with a sudden refusal. For God has generally raised up Prophets and Messengers of the Sons of men, to declare his will to the rest of mankind. And though they have been never fo mean in their persons and outward circumstances (as they many times have been, though these were not) yet wise Princes have never rejected them, except their pretensions have carried a manifest absurdity and contradiction along with them. When they have any face of truth, they deserve a serious regard and examination. For if any one came to us in the name

of our King, if it were in such a manner as we knew was agreeable to the King's custom of sending, all the World would condemn us, and we could not justifie our selves, did we not receive such a messenger with a reverence due to his character, and to the dignity of his Master. How much more should we be attentive to one who comes to us in the name of the Lord, and hear him with patience, and consider well the import of his message! If he should prove a deceiver, no punishment can be bad enough for him; but if we should unhappily reject the truth, nothing can serve to excuse us. Wise men, I say, will be careful not to offend in this.

WHEN the King of Ninevel had heard the meffage of Jonah, calling him and his people to repentance in the name of the Lord; we do not find that he examined the Prophet, who he was and whence he came; nor despised him for being an unknown poor man. But being conscious of the sins of his Ninevites, which well deserved such a reproof and warning, he prefently commanded them to repent accordingly, and so averted the threatned Judgment. On the contrary, those Kings which have despised fuch messages, have perished through their own contempt. Of which number was this King of Egypt, who had abuundant reason, as I shewed before, to expect that about this time the God of Israel would demand the release of his people: And therefore to reject his demand with such a flat denial, was contrary to that reverence which was due to fuch a meffage delivered to him in the name of the Lord.

II. THE request being reasonable for the matter of it, and delivered in terms of suitable respect, deserved a gracious answer. God had directed Moses to

tell Pharaoh, that Ifrael was his people, intimating that he had not given them up to the disposal of the King of Egypt: that Ifrael was his Son, his first-born, and consequently dearer to him than the Egyptians. He had ordered Moses to entreat courteously, and beseech the King to let his people go three days journey into the Wilderness, that they might facrifice to him. This was a very modest demand, and Moses offered it with that humble address which was prescribed. God has placed Princes in the feat of honour, and will have his messengers to approach them with humble obeisance. But if, on their part, they refuse to reverence him that is higher than the highest, whose Vicegerents they are, and by whom and for whom they reign, faying with Pharaob, I know not the Lord; neither will I obey his voice, then he proceeds to make himself known to be God, and to make them know themselves to be but men, by dealing plainly with them, threatning them, and finally punishing them for their contempt, as he dealt with Pharaoh in the course of this History, and as he afterwards treated the wicked Kings of his own people.

IF the King, laying afide his suspicion and prejudice, had taken the petitioners at their word, and generously bid them go facrifice to their God, he had not only faved himself and his people from manifold destruction, but had doubtless received from God's hand more than an equivalent for his loss of Israel. For Benefits are productive of beneficial returns both from God and man, whereas cruel usage arms the vengeance of both against the oppressor. Instances of the latter we may find abundant in this Book of Exodus. Of Benefits returned we have a memorable example, I Sam, xv. 6. where when King Saul was com-

commissioned by God to cut off Amalek from the face of the Earth, for cruelly affaulting diffressed Ifrael in the Wilderness, we read that he first took care to separate the Kenites from them, saying, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Ifrael, when they came up out of Egypt. Another example of such grateful return we have, 2 Kings vi. 13. which happened in the wars between Syria and Israel. The King of Syria had heard that the Prophet Elisha discovered his most secret Counsels to the King of Israel; whereupon the Syrian sent his army to apprehend the Prophet, being then in Dothan. But Elisha, in the power of that great courage which God gave him, boldly went to the Soldiers, and offered himself to lead them to the man whom they fought after; and before they were aware, he brought them: into Samaria, the metropolis of Israel. When the King of Israel found how his enemies were fallen into his hands, he begged of the Prophet, that he might fall upon them and cut them to pieces. But Elisha answered, Thou shalt not smite them. Wilt thou mite these whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master. The King readily hearkened to this advice; and made them a plentiful entertainment: and when they had, eaten and drank, he sent them home safely: So these bands of Syria came no more into Israel. For though Benhadad proceeded in the war, yet these men, in a conscientious regard of the kindness they had received, would never more bear arms against their benefactors. And God, to make the King of Israel a full recompence for his humanity to his enemies, and obedience. VOL. II.

to the word of the Prophet, soon granted him a happy issue of this War.

NO less favour would God have shown to the E-gyptians, if they had but proved obedient to his voice. How many times did he release them from punishment, upon their bare promise to release his people! And afterwards he injoyned Israel by a Law, Deut. xxiii. 7. that they should not abhor the Egyptians, but receive the posterity of that people into their assemblies in the third Generation, as an acknowledgment that their ancestors had sojourned in the land of

Egypt.

THE Use which we should make of what has been said, is, to be persuaded to acknowledge the divine will, and readily to obey it, whenever it is sufficiently made known to us. And we may be sure that it is the will of God, that we should amend our sinful lives, and correct any thing in our selves which we find to be contrary to the laws of holiness, justice, and goodness. And whatever helps us to discover such contrariety, may be called the voice of God, whether written in sacred Scripture, or in other good books, or suggested by the distates of our own Conscience, or inculcated by publick discourses or private admonitions.

WE need not be so much concerned from what quarter we hear the voice, which warns us to amend our lives, as to be sensible of our wants of amendment, and of the danger we run, by persevering in an evil course, of falling into the hands of an angry God. Of which if we are once duly sensible, a very moderate incitement will suffice to stir us up to that work, which we know to be necessary for our preservation.

I allow the dignity and authority of the Speaker ought to have a great influence upon the minds of the hearers. But alas! how common is it for perverse men to deny such authority, and oppose it with end-less cavils and contentions! The answer of all irreligious people, whenever they are pressed to a duty which it is against their inclination or interest to perform, is much the same with this of Pharaoh to Moses; Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? ' How does it appear that he has imployed you, and not frather that you use his name to give credit to your own ambitious purposes?' It is well known that fuch objections as these have broken the force of religion upon the hearts of Sinners in all ages of the World. The first opposition which the Devil made to God's will upon Earth, was to persuade mankind, that he had not faid that which he had really commanded, or that his words were not to be understood according to their plain meaning. Hath God faid that in the day ye shall eat of this tree, ye shall die? no surely. be knows that by eating of it, ye shall become even as wife as himself. By which way of reasoning the Tempter would infinuate, either that he who restrained man from so great a benefit, could not be God; or else that they who thought themselves so restrained, did not rightly interpret his words. Such was the Devil's Sophistry; and his instruments use the very same artifice in their disputes. They are bold enough to deny that the facred Scriptures are the word of God. But. if that be too gross to go down with their hearers, then they will wrest them to such a sense, as shall be fure to destroy the true intent and meaning of them. And these two methods are the greatest supports of Atheism and Immorality in the Christian World. For hereby

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hereby all revelation is set aside. Articles of Faith, and Doctrines of a future state are discredited, and the precepts of holy living evervated and stript of all di-

vine authority.

BUT if there be any who cannot be persuaded by historical arguments, that the Pen-men of Holy Writ were inspired by the Spirit of God; yet if they would look within themselves, and compare the exhortations, counsels, and rules of that word, with what they find reasonable and fit to be done, they would in time agree to receive it as very worthy of a divine Author. If Pharaoh will not take Moses his word for it, that God had fent him to demand the release of his people; yet let him compare his message with the predictions which he had formerly heard, that Canaan was defigned for the Inheritance of Israel: let him recollect the arguments which might induce him to believe, that this defign was now ripe for execution: Let him confider how agreeable it is to the Laws of hospitality, that a people who had been kindly invited by his Ancestor as friends, to partake of the stores of Egypt in a time of famine, and who had done them many years good service for that favour, should now have leave to go and facrifice to their God, or rather should be fully set at liberty, and even assisted by the Egyptians to gain possession of their promised Land: Let Pharaoh, I say, or any ingenuous man lay these things together, and whatever he might think of the person and pretensions of Moses, he must needs confels that the release of Israel at this time was highly agreeable to the will of God, and to the duties of hospitality and humanity, which any good-natured people would be ready to pay them.

THIS indeed is the reason why men are so forward to question the truth of divine revelation, and lessen the authority of the Prophets and Apostles; because they have no mind to discharge a good Conscience to God and their Brethren. For if they were resolved to do this, they would not want many arguments to persuade them, that Moses and the Prophets were the Messengers of God.

IT was a very pertinent question which the young man in the Gospel asked our Lord; Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life? Though he was not qualified to hear the dictates of this spiritual Master, having a strong biass upon his mind, which enclined him to his great effate, yet thus far he is exemplary to us all, that we should propose eternal life as the great end and aim of all our religious enquiries. Whosoever rests in any inferior defign, knows nothing of God's word as he ought to know it. He will never be illuminated with the full and true light of it. He studies it for the gratification of his pride, vanity, or some evil affection, which he will find condemned in it, and himself upon that account excluded from the real benefits and comforts of its

THERE is a great deal in that saying of our Lord: If any man will do the will of my Father, he shall know whether my dostrine be of God; For God will not suffer those to mistake the meaning of his word, who peruse it with an honest sincere intention, that they may be faithful doers of it. May he vouchsafe to create in us such honest and upright hearts, as may bring forth the fruits of his holy word unto everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, &c.



SERMON XXXI.

On the Sixth Sunday in LENT.

MORNING.

E X O D. ix. 16.

And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

Debate and Contest between Pharaoh

Amenophis, and Moses and Aaron the Mesengers of God to him, to demand of him

a release of the people of Israel, that they

might have leave to depart peaceably and safely out of his Country. This one would have thought should have been a welcome Message to him, when 'tis considered what apprehensions the Egyptians expressed a little before, that the Hebrews would grow too strong for their Government, and what sanguinary measures they had taken to weaken them and keep them under. Yet now, when they might be quite rid of them, they will by no means agree to let them go. This their resusal was, I suppose, grounded upon two Reasons.

Reasons. One was, the great profit which they made of the Israelites service, whose backs bore all the heavy burdens of Egypt; which the Masters must stoop to, and take upon themselves, if they parted with their Servants. The other was, the danger of suffering so many men to come together in one body, when they were full of just indignation and resentment; who, when they should see their Strength united, and join'd by many other Male-contents, might probably demand satisfaction of their old Task-masters, for the Hardships which they had put upon them.

FOR these reasons the Egyptians resolved to detain the Israelites in their old state of Slavery. And though Moses and Aaron demanded their Liberty in the name of the God of Heaven, and demonstrated by undeniable Miracles, that they had his Commission and Authority for so doing, yet Amenophis the reigning Prince would not hearken to them, but answered with defiance, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know him not, neither will I let Israel go. Hereupon God made himself known to him by executing such Judgments upon him and his People, as all the Magicians in Egypt were not able to endure, much less to alleviate or remove them.

IN the execution of which Judgments, when Pharaoh saw himself and his People ready to perish under them, and no remedy but the intercession of Moses with God to abate them, he gave good words, and promised that he would let Israel go. But as often as he was relieved and found himself easie, he constantly returned to his old Tyrannical Cruelty, and refused to perform what he had promised.

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HE had now been visited by six of these Judgments, and persisting in his Obstinacy was threatened with the seventh, which is introduced with the words of my Text, For this cause, says God to him by Moses, I have raised thee up, to shew in thee my Power, and that my Name may be declared throughout all the Earth.

WHICH words are interpreted by some Patrons of the Predestinarian Doctrine to this sense, That God sent *Pharaoh* into the World, and raised him up to be King of *Egypt*, on purpose to exercise him with the Rod of his Anger, and make him a conspicuous Example of the Divine Vengeance to all obstinate and incorrigible Sinners.

THAT Pharaok was made such an example, and that he is recorded for a warning to others, and that it was just with God to do all this, cannot be questioned, from the scope of the whole Narrative. But it seems inconsistent with the Divine Goodness to fay, that God created him for this very end, that he might be such a Monument of his Anger. For according to a Rule in Philosophy, Qui vult finem, vult media, He that wills the end, wills the means which lead to that end. Now the means or meritorious cause whereby Pharaoh came to be such an Example of the Divine Vengeance, was his Obstinacy, which made him hold out from one Judgment to another, inflexible and deaf to the Command of God. But we cannot fay that his Obstinacy was agreeable to the Divine Will, without afferting God to be the Author of Sin, or at least that he takes pleasure and delight in it; which is impossible. It is not possible that God should condemn and punish, as he did Pharach, for that which he makes necessary to be done,

or is any ways pleased with: this would be a contradiction both to his Holiness and Justice.

OTHER Interpreters therefore, both Jews and Christians, put the foregoing verse and this together, and paraphrase upon them thus: I stretched forth my hand against thee and thy people in my late Pestilence, by which I had then quite destroyed

' you from the face of the Earth, had it not been my resolution to reserve you for farther punishments.

'For which very cause I raised thee up again when thou wast falling; i. e. I kept thee from pe-

rishing by the former Judgments, that I might in-

flict more and greater upon thee, and make thy

destruction more remarkable to all the World.

WE see then, that when God says, he raised up Pharaoh for this cause, that he might magnisse his Power and Glory in his punishment, he does not mean that he made him either a Man or a King with such a view; but that he preserved him from the fatal stroke of former Visitations, that he did not expire under them, but his life was prolonged for farther Tryals and Exercises of this kind.

NOW this kind of dealing is very consistent with all the parts of the Divine character. It is agreeable to the Patience and Long-suffering of God, that he should reprieve Sinners from death, and not presently make a sull end of them, but give them repeated calls, and large time and space for Repentance. It is agreeable to his Mercy, that Correction should be given them, in order to prevent their final Perdition, and that others should be warned by their sufferings to take heed they provoke not God by the like Sins. It is agreeable to the Justice of God to make an example of a Sinner sometimes, that the World may

fee his Hand in the Government of it, and that none may promise himself impunity in the Commission of Sin. Lastly, it is agreeable to his Holiness, who hereby declares that he is of purer eyes than to behold Iniquity with any pleasure or approbation of it.

BUT in this particular case of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, it will be faid, that God foreknew and expresly foretold, that the Judgments which he inflicted upon them, would not bring them to hearken to his command, and let Israel go, but rather confirm them in their Resolutions to detain them, in defiance of all the Plagues that they could suffer, for fuch detention. To which I answer:

If, THAT the Fore-knowledge of God does not determine the actions of men so, as to take away their liberty of acting or not acting good or evil. We believe that God sees all things, past, present, and to come, in one view; and that he knows not only what we will do, but even what we will think, long before our Thoughts arise in our Mind. Such Knowledge is indeed too wonderful for us to comprehend how it can be; but it must be so extensive as this, where ever it is Infinite, as it is in the Divine Nature. And not only the Prophets, but even the most contemplative and rational Philosophers have been persuaded that nothing, not even in thought and imagination, not at the greatest distance of time to come, can be unknown to the Divine Prescience.

AT the same time that we own this unlimited extent of God's Knowledge, and that all future things are present to him, we must affert the Freedom of man's will in the choice of all his Actions, which can fall under the denomination of Good or Evil. God's. Fore-knowledge of them does not make them

absolutely

absolutely necessary to be done. For such Necessity would destroy their Morality, it being highly improper either to commend or blame, either to reward or punish any Agent, for doing that which he was not the Author of, nor had any Power to leave undone. This is a great mystery, a Problem which passes our understanding, how to reconcile God's Fore-knowledge of all Human actions with the entire freedom and choice of the Agents. And yet this we must maintain, otherwise we shall make the fountain of Holiness and Goodness the Author of all the moral Evil which is committed in the World. Which would be no less absurd than impious to asfert. This the Almighty utterly disclaims in many places of his holy word; but no where, I think, so expresly as in his reprehension of the rebellious 1/raelites, Jer. vii. 9, 10. Will ye, (fays he) Steal, Murther, and commit Adultery, and swear falsely, and burn Incense unto Baal, and walk after other Gods whom ye know not; and say, We are delivered to do all these Abominations?

HOWEVER, this we need not scruple to affirm, that some men are given up to a reprobate mind, to commit any flagitious Enormity which comes in their way: and though they gave themselves up to this wicked Spirit, yet the Divine Providence so orders the concourse of things, that their Sins shall contribute to the accomplishment of his designs. It was God's design from the Foundation of the World, that Christ should suffer death for the Redemption of it. And he foreknew that Son of Perdition, which should betray him, and the wicked hands which should take him and Crucisie him: And he sent him into the World among such a generation of Scribes and Pharisees,

rifees, as he knew would perpetrate this Fact. But the Spirit which instigated them in this procedure, was none of his: but came from him who was a Murderer from the beginning. They needed not to have been Actors in this Tragedy, had they not, by many degrees and measures of fin, abandoned themselves to the influence of this Spirit. There were many pious Jews of this Generation, who were fo far from approving of what the others did, that they believed in Chrift, and abhorred to have any hand in the shedding of his Blood. And so likewise here among the Egyptians, there were many who were not tainted with the Infidelity of Pharaoh and the rest of his Servants, but saw God in his works, and feared him, and were defirous that Israel should go into liberty. Nay so displeased were they with the Impiety of their Nation for fighting against Heaven, that they chose to leave it, and joyn'd themselves with the People of God to go out of it. And therefore,

adly, THE Discourses of Moses and Aaron, and the manifestations of God's power in his Judgments, were not lost, because they served for the Conviction and Conversion of a good number of Egyptians. All of them were not so hardened as Pharaoh and his Courtiers. We presently read in this Chapter, that when Moses had denounced a storm of Hail, with Thunder and Lightening, which should destroy not only the Trees and Fruits, but likewise every Man and Beast which should be found in the Field; Those who seared the word of the Lord among the Servants of Pharaoh, made their Servants and Cattel slee into the Houses, and so escaped the Destruction. Where we see, that while some slighted the word of the Lord, others fear'd it and obey'd it.

BUT it will be farther objected, that at the beginning of this Visitation God threatens, chap. iv. 21. saying, I will barden Pharaoh's Heart, that he will not let the People go. And cap. x. 1. When he was about to send the Plague of Locusts, he says to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh, for I have bardened his Heart and the Heart of his Servants, that I might shew these my signs before him; and that thou mayst tell thy Posterity what I did for their Deliverance. All which sounds, as if God from the first had hardened these men, and withheld them from complying with his demands by Moses, till he had poured out all the intended vials of his Fury

upon them.

I answer; 'TIS granted the Expressions do sound this way, and they well confift with the Divine Character, if interpreted according to the Series of this History. First, God foresaw the bent of Pharaob's Heart, that it would refift his repeated Summons to let Israel go. Of this event he apprises Moses beforehand: But commands him withal to go often, and sollicite Pharaoh for their release, and do those mighty works before him, which were proper to convince him that the hand of God was with the Messenger, and to shew him how many ways he was able, if neglected, to confume King and People. Did these powerful Arguments of conviction and persuasion harden Pharaoh, and confirm him in his Resolution to detain Israel? They did, 'tis very plain they did so. First he imploys his Magicians to try their Skill in doing the same Wonders, which were wrought by Moses and Aaron; and they were able to mimic some of them: and no doubt encouraged the King thereupon to believe, that the Gods of Egypt were as powerful as the God of Ifrael. Then he had always prevailed

with Moses to intercede with God for the removal of the incumbent Judgment: and upon his promise of Obedience it was removed. These alleviations and breathings made him flatter himself, that he should always be thus relieved: and perhaps he fancied that the Hand which scourged him would be tired, before he could be humbled. And thus the Divine dispensations may be faid to have been the accidental (not direct) occasions of Pharaoh's hardness. And it is a very common case, that the methods which God uses to bring Sinners to Repentance, are perverted by them to a quite contrary end, and leave them more incorrigible than they found them. If he prospers them, they think he is pleased; if he casts them down, and raises them again, they hope he is reconciled, though they are not reformed. The constancy of his application to them passes into customary form, and they grow just like that humoursome perverse kind of People, who the more they are courted and entreated to do a thing which is plainly for their own good, the more resolutely they set themselves against it.

HOW the methods which God takes to soften and bend Sinners, may end in their greater hardness and stubborness, we have pretty plainly seen; and since this worst effect will too often result from the best defigns, God may be said to harden them; but cannot without the greatest injustice be said to be the Author of their Sins. His dealings with them, whether he spare or punish them, have all one voice, and call out to them, as they did here, to turn from the error of their ways, to cease to do evil, and learn to do well. But if that which should have been for their salvation, prove the cause of their destruction, the fault cannot be in good means, but only in the abuse of them.

SOME

SOME explain God's hardening of Pharaoh to consist in this, that he gradually withdrew his Grace from him. But they would do well to tell us what they mean here by the word Grace. If they mean that influence of the Divine Spirit which operateth upon our hearts, and disposeth us to the fear and love of God, (and I know no other notion of Grace which will fuit this occasion) it will be very hard to conceive how the Spirit of the true God should at all be communicated to an Idolater, as we must suppose Pharaeh to have been: And if he never had this Grace, then he could not with any propriety be faid to lose it. We may, if we please, say that he was infatuated, i. e. that either he had not the Understanding to see, or not the Will to chuse what was best to be done in this Exigence. But if we feek for the cause of this infatuation, we must refolve it into his own obstinacy. Here was a demand made upon him in the name of the God of Ifrael, to release his people from their Servitude. And upon his refusal, he was visited with judgments in the same name: any one of which was too hard for him and his Magicians and all his people. Now that common sense and reason which he was Master of, might have taught him to yield presently, and prevent farther damage, fince it was in vain to refift. He had no need of any special Grace, nor of any thing more than common sense to help him to make this conclusion. But like myriads of other obstinate, fool-hardy men, he took his own way against all reason, and hoped he should do well, when he had no grounds for his hope. And this is his hardness, so much condemned here, as it well deserves.

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WE may farther observe upon this case of Pharaoh. that though we should take the words of my Text in that sense which seems most obvious, and say that God fent him into the World on purpose to make him a great example of the Divine Vengeance, yet we cannot, upon this, ground any argument of Predestination to eternal Happiness or Misery. For this case is meerly temporal. Here is no intimation that Pharaoh was required to change his Religion, but only to obey God in this one instance of releasing his People. Had he done this, he might have escaped as well as a predecessor of his, whom we read of, Geneas xii. who took Abraham's wife into his house, and thought to have made her his own wife, not knowing that she was another man's. But by restoring her to her Husband as soon as he knew this, he featonably obviated some afflictions, which were begun in his family upon her account. Had the Successor been as tractable in restoring Abraham's posterity, we might have heard as little of his Sufferings.

BUT this King could never be prevailed upon to put off the tyrant, and use the people with some humanity. When at last they were extorted out of his hand by the remonstrances of his own People, as well as of Moses and Aaron, he could not forbear pursuing them in order to cut them to pieces, 'till he found his own grave in the Red Sea, whither he fol-

lowed them.

NOW if any man will ask me, whether I think this obdurate Man's punishments ended here, I answer, No: I hold it absurd to imagine, that God would admit him to a better State hereafter, who had proved an implacable Rebel to him in this life. If we consider him only as an Idolater, I know no Title which

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any Idolater hath to that happy future State which we call the Kingdom of Heaven. I am fure the facred Penmen with one voice deny them to have any pretensions to it, but utterly exclude them from it.

BUT if Pharaoh had been educated in the most exact knowledge and worship of the true God, yet dying as he did an incorrigible Sinner, he would have had his portion with reprobates in utter darkness, at the greatest distance from the light and glory of the Divine Presence.

A'N D this brings the application of what has been faid, home to our selves. We have had more Mesfengers from God, more summons to do many parts of his will, than ever were fent to this King and his People. We have with them refused to be Obedient to the Heavenly Call, and thereby rendered our felves obnoxious to the Divine Judgments, and smarted under several of them. Like them too, instead of being awakened to a sense of our Disobedience, we have grown harder and more insensate under the Rod. We have feen many examples of God's wrath upon Sinners, and lightly passed them over, without being led by them to confider our own demerits.

HOW long shall we see this face of things, and hear the warnings of God to reform our Lives, and to prevent the worse effects of his displeasure, and still continue in a stupid insensibility, as if we were in no Danger? Shall we pass the time of our mortal Lives. as if we were not accountable to God for what we are doing here? He hath raised us up for this very purpose, that we should be for ever happy in our Observance, or miserable in our Contempt of his Holy word. And either his Mercy shall be glorified in our Salvation, or his Justice in our Punishment. Such Vot. II.

are God's Thoughts and Resolutions towards us; if we have no thoughts of our duty to him, and of the end of our coming into the World, it is because we are hardened and infatuated by the deceitsulness of Sin.

LET us, if we are not quite dead in Sins and Trespasses, if we are not yet plunged in the Red-Sea, the Deluge of all Carnal security and desperate presumption; let us see the Rod and him who hath appointed it. Let us hear him upbraiding us with our Lukewarmness, Hypocrisie, Atheism, and Forgetfulness of him. Let us see him exhibiting against us a long and black Catalogue of the Omissions of good Duties, which we had opportunities and encouragements to perform, but turned our backs upon them; together with the manifold Trespasses and violations of his Laws, for which our Consciences have testified against us: but we have seared our Consciences, broken our Vows. stifled and cast away all resolutions of Amendment. Let us humble our selves, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker, befeeching him that this heavy account which stands against us, may never be brought into Judgment, but be nailed to the Cross, and buried in the Grave of his Bleffed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, who died for our Sins, and rose again for our Justification: To whom with, &c.





SERMON XXXII.

On the Sixth Sunday in LENT.

EVENING.

E X O D. x. 1, 2.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, for I have hardened bis heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him: and that thou mayst tell in the ears of thy son and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my figns which I have done among ft them, that ye may know how that I am the Lord.



HEN God instructed Moses how to apply to Pharaoh for the release of Israel, he informed him what fort of a man this King was, one who would turn a deaf ear to his message, and suffer a great deal of the di-

vine Vengeance, before he would comply. I am sure, fays God, he will not let you go, no not by a mighty hand;

- onot till I have smitten Egypt with many prodigious
- ' Judgments, which I will execute in the midst there-
- of; then at last he will let you go.'

NOW tho' this was warning enough to Moses to expect a hard task of this business, and to arm himfelf with patience to go through it, yet his heart fometimes failed him, and he wanted repeated encouragements from the divine Oracle to support him under it, and carry him to the end of it. The first motion which he made in it, so provoked the King, that he encreased the People's burdens upon it. This caused them to murmur against Moses and Aaron, as the authors of their oppression. At which Moses was quite discouraged and disappointed; for he expected that the hardships of his People should have been relieved in some measure, and not aggravated; as appears by his expostulation with God, ch. v. 22. Lord, fays he, wherefore bast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaob to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to thy people, neither haft thou delivered them at all.

HEREUPON God saw it necessary to repeat the substance of what he had told him before. He reminds him of what he had faid concerning the hardnels of Pharaob's heart, and how he would endure many Judgments before he would relent. He commands him to go a second time to the People of Israel. and renew his Promise to them, that notwithstanding this discouraging beginning, they should quickly see themselves delivered from their Egyptian slavery. But the poor People's spirits were so deprest and sunk under their sufferings, that they had not Faith to be-

lieve it.

MOSES having tried and found that words would not prevail upon Pharach, he is commanded by God to go to him, and demonstrate the truth of his message by miraculous facts. And first he exhibits the innocent innocent miracle of his Rod turned into a serpent, and restored to a Rod again. But this making no due impression upon Pharaoh, he proceeds to bring prodigious and publick Judgments upon him and his People. First, He turned all their water into blood, so that it was unfit for the use of man, or the nourishment of fish. 2dly, He caused the waters to breed such innumerable shoals of frogs, that they covered the land, came into the houses, and defiled the vessels of the Egyptians. 2dly, He turned the dust of the earth into lice, which swarmed upon man and beast: 4thly, He filled the land with flies, which tainted all their provisions. sthly, He sent a grievous murrain upon their cattle, which destroyed them. 6thly, He inflicted boils and blains upon man and beaft. 7thly, He raised such tempests of hail, accompanied with terrible thunder and lightening, as killed man and beaft that were abroad in the field, broke the trees, and destroyed the fruits of the earth.

AND now Moses seems to be astonished, that so many Judgments had been inflicted, and no deliverance wrought by them. For tho' God assured him at the beginning, that he would visit Egypt with strange Judgments; yet he did not tell him how many, nor of what sort they should be. So that Moses knew not where-about he was in the course of his work. Only we may presume he began to think it was time to have done; and to conclude, that if seven such Plagues as had been inflicted upon Egypt, would not move the King to comply with his request, he was certainly inflexible, and that nothing which Heaven and Earth could do farther, would be able to stir him from his present resolution. And he seems to wonder why God will strive any longer with such

an incorrigible Man. 'Tis true, he says nothing of all this: but the answer of God in the words of my Text seems to be framed to such thoughts which Moses had in his heart. For he tells him, that the continuance of his Judgments was occasioned by the spiritual infatuation of Pharaoh's heart, and that the multiplication of them would serve for a good Memorial and demonstration of his Power to his People throughout all Generations. I have hardened Pharaoh's heart, says God, that I might shew these my signs before him. And that thou mightest tell thy posterity what things I have wrought in Egypt, that they may know that I am the Lord.

IN the first clause we have the Reason why God continued his Judgments upon Pharaoh, and why he proved so incorrigible under them, I, says God, have hardened his heart. In the second we have the good End which was served by these Judgments; they were an undeniable proof, that the power which executed them was truly divine.

And first, WHEN God tells Moses, I have hardened Pharach's heart; 'tis as much as to say, 'Do

- onot wonder that your endeavours and miracles
- which you have wrought before this man, have had no better effect upon him: do not condemn your
- felf as faulty, weak, or unfortunate upon this ac-
- count: for I foretold you how obstinate he would
- prove; and now I tell you farther, that he labours
- under spiritual as well as temporal Judgments; and
- that by his manifold defiances of me, he hath made
- ' himself the object of my just Vengeance, and is for-

' saken and reprobated of God.'

2dly, WHEN God says, I have hardened Pharaoh's beart; we must take care that we understand this so,

as not to imagine that God can be the author of sin; for this is contrary both to his general Character, and to all his particular Attributes. As God cannot be tempted with evil, so neither tempts he any man. He cannot so far contradict himself, as outwardly to call upon us to do one thing, and inwardly stir up our Wills to do another.

AND therefore those who have considered this case say, that God hardened Pharash's heart, by depriving him of the light of his Understanding; which certainly he might do with as much justice, as he can take away the bodily fight. He is the Author and Giver of all good Gifts, and may punish us with the loss of inward as well as outward Blessings, whenever we abuse them. In this sense it is that the Scripture fays of wicked men in general, God hath stopt their ears, blinded their eyes, hardened their hearts, lest they should see and hear and understand so as to be converted and healed. What can found more like a divine Decree to hinder mens Salvation? And yet it is certain from the very nature of God, and from abundant more passages of his Word, that he never willeth the death of a finner, but would have all men repent and be faved. But, as I said before, he deprives the unthankful and unholy of inward as well as outward Bleffings, and punishes them with spiritual as well as corporal Infirmities. According to the faying of our Lord, that he who uses his Talents, shall find them improve and grow upon his hands; while he who neglects them, loses them, and brings them to nothing. By such abuses of their Talents Pharach and others like him are faid to harden their own hearts. and that in the most direct and proper sense of hardning. For we see habitual sinners in a thousand in-FA stances.

stances, after all that God and man can do for them, or against them, after all the methods of Mercy and Judgment, are as far from reforming their lives, as is the Ethiopian from changing his skin, or the Leopard his spots. And yet they have their lucid intervals; they will pray, will lament, will confess their demerits sometimes, as Pharaoh did, the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat for me this once. By which they do not intend, any more than he did, to come in generously and freely to the obedience of the divine Will; but only to procure some present remission of their sufferings. Which shews that they have the slavish temper of reprobate Spirits, that they are uncapable of ever being the children of God, of being inspired with a filial love and reverence of his divine Majesty.

SUCH Spirits being known to him who is the fearcher of hearts, he deals with them according to their constitution; and knowing that they are unqualified for any spiritual Grace, (for I believe there are some Men as incorrigible as Devils, tho' God only can certainly know them) he affords them however the outward means, that he may justifie his dealings with them, to all the World; tho' he knows that such means will be so far abused, as to harden

them more and more in their fins.

WHICH brings me to offer another way of folving this difficulty in my Text. In order to which, I say, there is a principal and an accidental cause of the sins of men. The principal cause is, our own corrupt wills and affections. The accidental is any object or occasion given to draw out our Affections into action.

NOW in the commission of Sin, the accidental cause or author is clear of the guilt of it, tho' in scripture style 'tis often spoke of, as if it were the principal. I will illustrate this by an instance of Scripture History. It is in I Samuel xxi. xxii. where we read how David flying from Saul to Achifb King of Gath, called at Nob the City of the Priests, where he was entertained and his wants supplied by Ahimelech the Chief-Priest. This was observed by Doeg an Edomite, master of Saul's herdsmen, who informed Saul of it; who like a jealous tyrant caused the Priests and the whole City of Nob to be massacred, as taking part with his enemy: only Abiathar escaped, and fled to David, and told him what had happened. Whereupon David answered, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house.

NOW here every one sees that Saul and Doeg were the principal and guilty Authors of this Massacre; and David only the accidental innocent cause of it: for he had not conspired with Ahimelech against the Government, nor done any thing which could justly expose him to such a cruel Punishment; yet he calls himself the occasion of it, because it was inslicted upon his account.

THUS in this history of Pharaoh, Moses puts the accidental cause for the principal. For when upon his first appearance at Court to procure the release of his People, he found that their burdens were encreased, and their oppression more grievous than ever, he cries out, in his complaint to God, of this cross event, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil intreated this people? Now it was not God, but Pharaoh who eyil intreated them: but because God's Message to Pharaoh was

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the occasion of this cruel usage, Moses mentions it as if it had been the principal cause of it. And so through the whole course of this business; when Moses fays Pharaob hardened his heart, he speaks properly; when he fays God hardened him, he means accidentally. For God's dealings with him were very proper to mollify him, and bring him to a compliance; but meeting with fuch a heart as his, they happened to have a contrary effect upon him. Every Judgment, and every Deliverance from it, would have led an ingenuous mind to fee the wrath of God for disobedience. and his clemency upon promise of amendment. But this Heart was so proud and audacious, as to contend with the Almighty; it was exasperated with severity, and conceived vain hopes, upon the removal of a Judgment, that the hand of God was tired, and would yield to the obstinacy of man. With respect to this perverse temper it was, that God fays, I have hardened Pharaoh's heart, meaning, by his dealings with him, which were intended to correct and amend him. but by his misapplication of them, they still lest him more incorrigible, and finally ended in his utter deftruction.

BUT tho' Pharaoh and the Egyptians misapplied God's Judgments, yet they were not lost to the World; they are appointed to be recorded and taught as a standing doctrine in I/rael, throughout all generations. Thou shalt tell, says God, in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done amongst them: that ye may know how that I am the Lord. This was the good end which was served by these Judgments, they were an undeniable proof that the Power which executed them was truly divine. Which was the second thing to be observed from the words of my Text.

ACCOR.

ACCORDINGLY the mention of these Judgments occurs very frequently in the facred writings. Te have feen, says God, Exod. xix. what I did unto the Egyptians. And in the next chapter, at the delivery of the Law from mount Sinai, he who formerly had styled himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, now proclaims himself the God who brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. In memory of this, the beginning of the year was altered, and the Passover instituted. It was to be a part of their yearly thanksgiving, when they offered the basket of first-fruits to God, and there is a particular form for it, Deut. xxvi. - When Ifrael revolted from God to the worship of Idols, and he expostulated with them for so doing, the expostulation begun with mention of what he had done for them in Egypt, Judg. vi. By which he upbraided them with two crimes: 1st, With Infidelity, in departing from the living God, who had so fignally confounded the Idols of Egypt. 2dly, With Ingratitude, in forfaking their best benefactor for the service of those lying vanities, who never did nor could do them any real kindness. And I might add, that this history condemned them of monstrous infatuation, who would feek their protection from helpless Idols, when they knew what the Egyptians had suffered for their adherence to them. Upon all these accounts they were extremely culpable, as their holy Prophets confess, and their history abundantly shews. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt, fays the Pfalmist, neither remembred they the multitude of thy mercies. I spake to your fathers, says God by Ezekiel, chap. xx. laying. Defile not your selves with the idols of Egypt. but they would not hearken to me.

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SUCH unhappy errors God foresaw would be the fins of his People. And therefore in order to prevent them, he enjoyns Israel by the law of my Text, diligently to teach their Posterity what he was now doing for them. This Law is largely repeated and enforced, Deut. vi. 20. When thy fon, tays he, asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say to thy son, We were Pharaob's bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord shewed signs and wonders great and fore apon Egypt, upon Pharaob and all his household, before our eyes. And he brought us out from thence, to the land which he sware to our fathers. And commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.

THUS we begin to apprehend the Extent of God's design in his dealings with the People of Israel. He did not send them into Egypt barely for their relief in a time of dearth; nor bring them out of it again with such terrible Judgments, only to punish the Egyptians for oppressing and detaining them. For he could have relieved them in a famine without sending them thither, and he could have brought them out without inflicting such Judgments on their oppressors. But he did all this that he might be exalted among the Heathen, and that the idolatrous World might know that he is God.

IN the days of Abraham, the Church of the true God was confined to the narrow limits of his Family, and was propagated no farther than the branches of it; with whom it was in a manner buried, during their sojourning in Egypt. This opportunity was taken

by the reprobate Spirits to make themselves the Idols of mankind, and to usurp the dominion of this World to themselves. At last it was necessary for the supreme Lord and only true God to arise, and magnisse his Omnipotence to the consusion of these usurping Idols. And what scene so proper for the display of his triumphs over them, as the land of Egypt, the great University of the World, slourishing in the studies of wisdom, and particularly samous for its Deities and Magicians. For the Majesty of Heaven to conquer these powers, was in effect to conquer all the World. And it was enough for him to say, as he does, I will execute judgments upon all the gods of Egypt: I am the Lord. In this God sufficiently demonstrated himself to be above all gods.

THUS we discover, in some measure, the Extent of God's design in these dispensations. But we do not see his sull intent and meaning, till we find these types verified in the life of every true candidate of the heavenly Canaan; who by nature is in a state of bondage and slavery to that ghostly Pharaoh, the great oppressor of all God's children; and cannot rescue himself, but must depend upon the mighty arm of God for his deliverance. And when he is delivered from his Task-masters, who led him captive to do evil, when he marches under the shadow of the Most High, like Israel in the Wilderness, he must still expect much opposition, he must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.

THIS is but a hint of a parallel between the Letter and the Spirit, the Law and the Gospel. But he will be able to compleat it for himself, who diligently practises the rule of my Text, and delights to acquaint himself and his family with the wonderful

Works of God recorded in both Testaments. For in both he will find that it is the same God, who having spoken to the Fathers by Moses and the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son. It is he that faid, Search the Scriptures, (he meant those of the Old Testament, the New not being then written) for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and those are they that testifie of me. And, If ye believe Moses, ye will believe me; for he wrote of me. It is his Apostle that said, What soever things were written afore-time, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. From hence we learn, that this God who delivered his People out of Egypt, is our God for ever and ever, and hath the same fatherly affection for us, the same mighty Arm to protect us, the same superiority over all our enemies ghostly and bodily.

HOW mightily should it comfort and rejoice our hearts, to hear this gracious Lord and Saviour speaking to us in his bleffed Word, in the multitude of precious Promises, of heavenly Precepts, of true Narratives and Examples how he hath visited and redeemed his People of old, and what a very present help he is to all those who put their trust in him!

LET us delight to celebrate the Praises of this God, to speak of all his marvellous Works, to fill all that are about us with worthy notions and impressions of his Majesty, that they may have a lively sense of his Power and Presence in the government of the World, and live under an awful regard of his Omniscience, that he hears and sees every thing that is faid and done amongst us, and knows the very thoughts and meditations of our hearts.

LET us open our mouths, and declare the things of God, such as we have heard and seen our selves, and such as our fathers have told us. Let us not hide them from the children of the generations to come; but shew forth the honour of the Lord, his mighty and wonderful Works that he hath done. That they may teach them to the children which are yet unborn, and that they may shew their children the same: To the intent that they may all keep the Covenant of God, and walk in the way of his Commandments.

IF the knowledge of God were but inculcated according to what he commands in the words of my Text, and as his Saints and Servants of old have been careful to make him known, how great would his name be upon earth? His Majesty would be even visible to men; and all prophaneness, insidelity, and blasphemy would vanish, and like Pharaoh and his Magicians, be quickly confounded and brought to

nothing.

THE Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hid in a field. That Field is the Church, and that Treasure is the Word of God; which whoso discovers by a diligent perusal, will find it, with the holy Psalmist, far dearer to him than thousands of gold and silver. May we so hear, mark, learn, and inwardly digest this Word, that by patience and comfort of it we may embrace and ever hold fast that blessed hope of everlasting life, which is given us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory world without end.





SERMON XXXIII.

On EASTER-DAY.

MORNING.

E X O D. xii. 21.

Then Moses called for all the Elders of Israel, and faid unto them; Draw out and take you a Lamb according to your Families, and kill the Paffover.



H E struggle between Pharaoh and Moses concerning the Release of the Children of Israel, comes now to be decided, and the decision is made in favour of the Petitioners. The Divine Prediction at the be-

ginning of this contest was, that it would not be ended without a high and ftrong hand from Heaven. Nine times had this hand been lifted up, and the scourge had fallen in heavy Plagues upon King and People, but was hitherto refifted and defied. 'One

- ftroke more, fays God, I will inflict, which will
- force Pharaoh and his Egyptians, not only to con-
- fent to your Departure, but even to hurry you out:
- They shall bow down to you, and entreat you to

go, and take all that belongs to you, and be wil-

6 ling moreover to lend you Money and Jewels, and

Raiment, which you shall borrow of them.'

THIS finishing stroke was the Slaughter of all the First-born of the Land of Egypt, from the firstborn of the King, that was to succeed him in his Throne, even to the first-born of the Slave that ground in the Mill, and all the first-born of Beasts. This was notified to Pharaoh beforehand, and heheard it with the same stupid Incredulity as he had done all the rest of the divine Warnings. Wherefore God prepares to execute his Threatning. And first he gives the Israelites orders to offer Sacrifice upon this occasion, and to mark their doors with the blood of the Sacrifice, that when the destroying Angel went forth to flay the First-born of the Egyptians, he might readily know their Houses from those of the Israelites. Which shows that the Israelites, however they dwelt by themselves at first, were now much mingled with the Egyptians. But why could not this Angel distinguish the two people as well in this, as he had done in all the former Visitations, without a special Mark or Token? For we read that all the Israelites escaped the nine Judgments which had been inflicted on the Egyptians. No doubt but this Sacrifice and Sign were instituted for more reasons than just to serve the present occasion; of which we will see more afterwards. Let us first look into the Circumstances of the Institution, which was thus: Every House-holder was directed to take a Lamb, or a Kid (though this second was seldom used) of the first year. i. e. from above eight days, to under a year old, as the Practice was: a Male, as being more perfect than the Female; without blemish, i. e. not blind, Vol. II. maimed.

maimed, scabbed, nor in any part desective or redundant, as the blemishes are reckoned up, Lev. xxii.

THIS Lamb was to be taken up on the tenth day of the month Abib, which answers to our March, and kept till the fourteenth day, and killed in the evening, and the blood of it to be sprinkled with a bunch of Hystop on the Lintel and two side Posts of the Door; which blood (fays God) when I fee, I will pass over your Houses, when I stay the First-born of the Egyptians. This is the reason why the whole Sacrifice is called in Hebrew, Pefek; in Chaldee, Greek, and Latin, Pascha; in our Language, the Passover. The Carcass of the Lamb they were to roast whole, without taking out the appurtenance, or breaking a bone thereof. They were to eat it with a Salad of bitter Herbs, in memory of the bitter oppression which they had endured in Egypt, and in the posture of men just fetting out upon a Journey, with their long Vests girt up about their Loins, their Shoes on their Feet, for commonly they went barefoot, and their Staff in their Hand; and were not to stir out of their Houses till next morning. At the same time they were injoyned to eat unleavened Bread for seven days following. And indeed they lived upon fuch Bread four times as long at their Departure out of Egypt. For they were driven out in such haste, that they had no time to leaven their Bread in the usual way.

THUS we have seen the Institution of the Passover, and the reason why it was so named. Let us now enquire into the ends for which it was insti-

n

tuted. And,

1. THIS Sacrifice was ordained to be kept as an anniversary Festival for ever, in memory of Israel's deliverance

deliverance out of Egypt. Ye shall observe this thing (says God) for an ordinance to thee and to thy Sons for ever. And when your Children shall ask you, what you mean by this Service, you shall tell them how the Lord, when he slew the First-born of the Egyptians, passed over the houses of the Israelites, who at that time sojourned in Egypt, so that none of their Children were stricken with Death; and at the same time he delivered them with a strong hand out of the House of Bondage: and as a farther memorial of this Deliverance, he commanded that the first-born Males, both of Man and Beast, should be esteemed as devoted and consecrated to him.

IN virtue of this folemn Institution, the Feast of the Passover was religiously observed by this People. when they were settled in the Land of Canaan, if we make some Exceptions for the troublesome Times. and dissolute Government of some of their idolatrous Kings. This was one of the three anniversary Festivals, when all the Males who were in a condition to travel (except Slaves) were obliged to appear before the Lord at Jerusalem, where they were to kill their Paschal Lambs, and in none other place, and the Blood, instead of being sprinkled on the Doors of their Houses, was poured out upon the Altar; and they did eat it fitting, or leaning upon Couches, and not standing as at first, and varied from the first institution in some other Circumstances. Particularly they thought they answered the design of this Memorial, if each Person eat of it the quantity of an Olive. Which shows, that so long as the substance of Religion is preserved, the Rites and Ceremonies of it may be varied according to the exigence of Time G 2

Time and Place: And it justifies us in some Variations which have been made in our Christian Sacraments from the first Institution, and particularly for using a less quantity of the Elements in our present Administrations, than what we find was customary at

the beginning.

2. ANOTHER End for which this Passover was ordained, was to pre-fignifie our great Christian Passover, the Sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jefus Christ, who is the Substance of all these Types and Shadows; the things which of old befel the People of God, were figuratively transacted, and with a view to him. So St. Paul applies them in various places of his Writings and Discourses to the Jews; which he would not have done, if such Applications had not been made of these things to Christ, by others as well as by himself. He observes then, Heb. ix. that under the Law, things were commonly purged with Blood; and without the shedding of Blood there was no remission of Sins. But it is not possible, (adds he) that the Blood of Beasts should take away Sins. Therefore he styles the Law a Schoolmaster to bring men to Christ; and affirms that Christ is the End of the Law, and that by his Blood alone we are fanctified and cleanfed from the stain and guilt of our Sins. And he tells the Corinthians, 1 Cor. v. That Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore (fays he) let us keep the Feast: not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of Malice and Wickedness, but with the unleavened Bread of Sincerity and Truth.

IN like manner St. Peter speaks to the Jews of the Dispersion, I Epist. chap. I. Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your Fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot; just such as the Paschal Lamb was required to be: who verily was ordained before the foundation of the World, but was manifested in these last times.

TO the same Type did John the Baptist allude, when pointing out Jesus to the people, Joh. i. he said, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the Sins of the World. Whereupon some that heard him, immediately followed Jesus. Whence we may justly suppose they understood this to be one of the Cha-

racters of the Messiah.

IN the Revelation of St. John, he is often called by the name of the Lamb: He is there represented as sitting on a Throne, and celebrated by every creature in Heaven, in Earth, and under the Earth, who sing aloud, saying, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing. There is no other imaginable Reason, why the Messiah should be sigured by the Embleme of a Lamb, but this; that he was a propitiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind.

LET us now see what there was in our Saviour's Life and Death, correspondent to the character of the Paschal Lamb.

AND 1. By vertue of his immaculate Conception and holy Life, he was without blemish and without spot. 2. By suffering about the thirty-fourth year of his Age, he was in that respect equivalent to a Lamb of the sirst year. 3. He was nailed to the Cross at the celebration of the Passover, and at that very time of the day, when they were sacrificing the Paschal Lamb. 4. Though he was crucified between

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two Thieves, who according to custom had their Legs broken, to dispatch them the sooner, yet the Soldiers who did this, when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his Legs, that in this respect too he might resemble the Paschal Lamb, as St. John observes, Joh. xix. 36. none of whose bones, according to the Law, might be broken.

THUS we have seen how in Life and Death, our Saviour was an adequate Antitype to the Paschal Lamb. Let us now look to the end of both Sacrifices, and

fee the correspondence between them.

AND 1. As the Passover was instituted at the time when God visited and redeemed his people from the Idols of Egypt, and the House of Bondage; So when the fulness of time, the maturity of the divine Decrees, was come, God fent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that they might become the Sons of God, Gal. iv. 4. Ifrael was not more effectually separated and called out from among the Egyptians, than Christ called a people from among Jews and Gentiles, and all Nations of the Earth, to constitute his Church and Family, to be one Fold under one Shepherd, to be sanctified and regenerated by his Holy Spirit, into a peculiar people zealous of all good works.

2dly, AS the blood of the Paschal Lamb, sprinkled with Hystop upon the Doors of the Israelites, was a token to the Destroying-Angel to pass over them, and do them no harm; so the blood of Christ is our defence against the avenging Justice of God. When our accusers call our Sins to remembrance, and bring them into Judgment, and plead them against as to our condemnation; then Christ our Advocate appears

appears for us, and urges in our behalf those Articles of his gracious Covenant which he hath contracted with us. That he hath laid down his life for our Redemption, that whoso believeth in him, should not perish, but live for ever: That he came into the world to feek and to fave that which was loft: That of all which the Father hath given him he will lofe nothing. but will raise up every one of his deceased Servants at the last day to Life everlasting: That the blood of Christ cleanseth from all Iniquity: That it is a sufficient Propitiation and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World, for Men without number, who will embrace the conditions of this benefit, is the constant Doctrine of the Evangelists and Apostles. And though the Jews Passover was a Sacrifice of Atonement, yet between theirs and ours there is no comparison. For theirs had no intrinsick virtue, but was only available by the divine Sanction: but ours in its nature is more worth than all the lives of Angels and Men. And if the blood of Beafts was by God's appointment instituted to purific the Flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge our Gonscience from dead works to serve the living God? Heb. ix. 13.

annual celebration of it injoyned, for a perpetual Remembrance of the Deliverance which God wrought for his people out of Egypt; so this Season is the special commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God, who was slain to redeem us from spiritual Egypt, the slavery of Sin, and tyranny of the Devil. As this is incomparably the greater Deliver nee, so it justly demands more frequent Remembrance. And there-

fore besides this solemn Season of the year, we recognize this Deliverance as often as we partake of the Body and Blood of our Lord in the Holy Sacrament. For this he instituted in remembrance of his Death and Passion: So that we may celebrate our Christian Passover as often as we please. And why should it not always please us, fince it is so cheap and easie in the Performance? We are not confined to one particular place, as the Jews were to Jerusalem, for the offering up of this Sacrifice. We are not put to the charge of purchasing a Lamb, nor injoyned to eat it with bitter Herbs and unleavened Bread; our Sacrifice is an oblation of Praise and Thanksgiving, that reasonable Service which is worthy of him who hath called us to perfect Liberty, that spiritual Incense prophesied of by Malachi i. 11. which the Gentiles should offer up to the name of God in every place; Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

THIS is very proper for us to remember, to meditate upon, and to view in its full extent and importance. Our first Parents lost their Canaan, that state of Felicity in which God at first created them, and went down into spiritual Egypt, into the dominion of Sin and regions of Death to feek food But while they laboured for the Meat which perisheth, and purfued the gratifications of their carnal Appetites, they loft their Liberty, their Innocence and Virtue, the fayour of God, and the comforts of a good Conscience; and fell under the oppression and tyranny of the Devil, who set his Taskmasters over them, his malignant Spirits, in conjunction with their own corrupt Affections, to beat and compel them to the drudgery of his Service.

MANKIND were sensible of the Oppression, and groaned to be rescued from the burden of it: and many attempts were fet on foot by the more refined Wits of their Brethren, to shake off the Yoak, and beat out a way to Liberty. But all proved ineffectual, 'till the Son of God took this work of Redemption upon him. According to that which he faith, Pf. xl. Sacrifice and Offerings, which were after the Law, thou didst not defire, but a body hast thou prepared for me; in which he came to do the Will of God in our stead. that his obedience, both Active and Passive, might be imputed to us, and reckoned as truly ours, as if every one of us had personally performed it. And while he assumed our human Nature, he imparted to us the benefits of his own Divinity; inspiring our Souls with the Spirit of his Holiness, and adorning us with the Robes of his Righteousness. He became poor that we might be made rich, forrowful that we might rejoice, despised that we might be glorified, and died that we might live for ever.

BY his having immortalized our corruptible Nature in his own Person, he hath given us a pledge and earnest of his Ability to do the same for every one of us. And he has assured us by the most clear and serious Promises that he will do it. And indeed it was not for his own, but our sake, that he has done all this in himself. For nothing could be added to the Felicity and Glory which he enjoyed before the world began. And therefore through him, and in virtue of his Victory, we shall triumph over Sin and Satan, Death and the Grave; and because he dwelleth in Heaven, we shall live there also.

TRUE it is, this Victory and Triumph is not yet compleated in us: we are not yet free from the dominion

dominion of Sin, the tyranny of Satan, the prison of the Grave. But neither was Ifrael immediately tranflated from Egypt into Canaan; they wandered 40 years in the Wilderness. Let it suffice that we are on our way towards our spiritual Land of Promise, and shall as certainly arrive at it as they did at last. For we have as clear a Title to it, as express Promises of God for it, as many admonitions to put us in mind of it, and excite us to feek after it, as ever they had. And therefore we may reckon upon it as much, as if we were already fettled in it, and esteem our selves the Redeemed of God, as much as if we actually faw the Graves opening, the Dead rising, and the Angels attending to convey us to Heaven. For the Promises of God in Christ Jesus are Yea and Amen: Though he tarry, let us wait for him, for he will not, he cannot disappoint us.

WE are here in the condition of Travellers, and must arm our selves with Faith and Patience to carry us to our Journey's end. We know not the times and seasons which God hath determined for finishing his works. But this we know, that he is setting forward and preparing to come among us; our Duty is to

watch and wait for his coming.

HOW EVER, he has not so determined the times for executing his Decrees, but that the manners of Men have a great influence in the quickening or retarding of them. The Incredulity of the Israelites, and their questioning the power of God to bring them into the possession of Canaan, was the cause which made their Marches thither the work of forty years, which might have been well performed in as many weeks. And so no doubt our Infidelity is a hindrance to the consummation of our Felicity. We have Scoffers

among us, who say, Where is the Promise of his coming? and they are so far from being rebuked, that they are savourably heard. And this certainly provokes God to withhold his Blessings from us.

THE two Kingdoms of Glory and Grace, are equally built upon the foundation of Faith. The Bleffings of both are granted upon this condition, Be it unto thee according to thy Faith. The want of this is what makes the day of the Lord a terrible day, and that which in such Circumstances we could hardly wish to see: for I don't remember any instance of God's visiting a faithless world, but it was for the execution of some threatned Judgment.

WHEN the Son of Man cometh, shall be find Faith on the Earth? And yet those who hope to see his face in peace, must both believe and wish for his coming. otherwise they will not reap the comforts of it: For only unto them that look for him (says St. Paul) shall be appear the second time without Sin unto Salvation, Heb. ix. 28. The reason why most of us do not look for him with any defire to fee him, is the Conscience which we have of our unpreparedness to meet him. We know that, generally speaking, we are doing fuch things as are not agreeable to his Gospel, but fuch as he hath told us will exclude us from his heavenly Kingdom. While we are thus employed, we may well dread to see him come among us, as justly fearing that he will come to destroy rather than to fave us. And therefore to make our felves easie in this respect, and render his Coming desirable to us, let us now go to meet him with our Hearts and Affections, by fetting them on things above. Let us seriously apply our selves to the Practice of those Duties which shall fit us for his appearing, whenever

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whenever it shall happen; passing our time as Strangers and Pilgrims here, and reckoning that our Inheritance is with the Holy Patriarchs in the heavenly Canaan. Then shall we not be amazed, but rejoice to see the Son of Man, God in our Nature, coming in the Clouds of Heaven, and to hear the Sound of that Trumpet which shall open the Graves, and bring up the Dead to live again; as knowing that the time is come when we must be stript of all our Sins and Infirmities, and put on that Incorruption and Immortality which Christ hath purchased for us, and be united to him our head, and shine with his glory, in those illustrious Mansions which he is now preparing for us, and where he liveth and reigneth, &c.





SERMON XXXIV.

on EASTER-DAY.

EVENING.

EXOD. xiv. 30, 31.

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the band of the Egyptians: and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses.



ARVELLOUS was the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the divine power was very visible in conducting them and making a way for their escape. For be-

sides that from twenty years old and upwards, they numbered six hundred thousand men, their women and children, and mixt multitude, must be supposed to make above twice this number; and they had many slocks and herds; all which put together, must needs be a dead weight upon a people in their march; in which it concerned them to be expeditious. For though the Egyptians were lately glad to be rid of them,

them, yet when they considered that they had parted with so many servants and cattle which they esteemed as their own, besides many valuable things which they had lent them, they repented of what they had done; and in a few days time they mustered a formidable Army, consisting of six hundred of their best chariots, says the Sacred Text, with sifty thousand horse, and two hundred thousand soot, as Josephus assirms, and quickly overtook the slying, or rather the slow-paced and much-dispirited Israelites.

IT is said indeed, Exod. xii. 51. that God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt by their armies; and chap. xiii. 18. that they were harneffed: whence some may think they were well prepared for war. But the Hebrew word means no more than that they marched in good order: and it is against reason to think that their oppressors would permit them to keep fuch arms as might have enabled them to fight for their liberty. Besides, it is expresly affirmed that they were all foot-men, and consequently had nothing to answer the chariots and horses of their pursuers. And it farther appears that they were unfit for war, because it is said, God led them not through the land of the Philistines, though that was nearest to Canaan, for this very reason, lest they should be molested with wars, and discouraged, and so return again to Egypt.

THEIR great security was, the Presence and Power of the divine Majesty, which appeared over their Camp at their first setting out, and directed their course and stations, moving when they were to march, and standing still when they were to rest. This appearance is described, Exod. xiii. 21, 22. The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of sire, to give

them light to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, through the whole course of their travels, till they came to pass over Jordan into the land of Canaan. This manner of the divine conduct is celebrated in

many places of Holy Scripture.

BY this supernatural direction God led his people. not the shortest and readiest way from Egypt to Canaan; for then they must have gone a midland road. leaving the red fea on the right hand, and the media terranean on the left, the same way that their Ancestors came down into Egypt. But because this road was much inhabited by Philistines and others who would have opposed their passage; and because God had decreed to give them his Law, for the government of their Church and Nation, and to accustom them to the observance of it a good while before they entred into the promised land; therefore the figual of his presence carried them a very different way, into the wilderness of Etham, which lay upon the red sea, or gulf of Arabia, eastward from Ramesses and Succoth. from whence they fet out.

AND here it may be noted, that whereas the Israelites at first petitioned only for three days to go and facrifice in the Wilderness, though the Egyptians at last were content to release them for ever; it is probable that the King and his Counsellors resolving to setch them again, concluded that they had satisfied the divine command, by giving them leave to be gone three days; and that when those days were ended, they

thought they were at liberty to reclaim them.

THEY likewise flattered themselves that Heaven declared in their favour, by leading the Israelites into a Wilderness, where they were entangled, and so bounded

bounded by the sea on one hand, and mountains and narrow passages on the other, that if they pursued them vigorously, they should quickly reduce them. And humanly speaking they reckoned very right; for nothing less than a Divine Power could extricate them. Accordingly they purfued, and overtook them encamping by the sea, on the side of Pihabiroth, before Baal-zephon. This they interpreted as a lucky omen: For the mountain of Baal-zephon was so denominated from an Idol erected on the top of it, whom they called. The Lord of the Watch: For the Egyptians believed, or at least made their slaves believe, that if any of them offered to escape that way into Arabia, this Idol would arrest them, and force them to return to their Lords and Masters. And Pharaoh might probably animate his Soldiers with an affurance of victory, by telling them, that their God had delivered their Enemies into their hand.

ON the twentieth day of Nisan, which was about this time of the year, and five days after Ifrael's departure from Ramesses, the Egyptian army came within fight of them, and drew out and extended themselves fo far, as made it impossible for the Israelites, by any skill or power of their own, to escape them. For they had no passage before them, nor any trained Soldiers, chariots or horsemen, to remove their Enemies in the rear. So that nothing but immediate destruction was presented to their eyes.

THIS filled their Camp with terror, and the lamentations of the women and children so astonished the men, that they forgot the wonderful works which God had lately wrought for their deliverance, and his guidance of them to this very place by the fignal of his own presence, and for this very purpose, that he

might

might triumph over the confident Egyptians, by fighting against them in the defence of his people. But they were so confounded with their present circumstances, that they did nothing but murmur at Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, and thought of nothing but surrendring themselves with all humble sub-

mission to their old oppressors.

HEREUPON Moses put them in mind, how God had undertaken to work out their deliverance; which they were not to expect either from themselves, or from any human affiftance: That they would not be put to fight the Egyptians, nor so much as to draw a sword, or shoot an arrow at them: They had nothing to do but stand still, and see the Salvation of the Lord, who delights to magnifie his power and providence in rescuing his servants out of the most presfing extremities; and that not one of the numerous host of the Egyptians, which they so much dreaded, should remain alive after that day. Having said this, he put up a short prayer to God, imploring his speedy affistance and counsel to direct them what to do in this great distress. God answered him immediately. that he should command the people to march forward to the sea-side; and assure them that they should find the waters open to them, and give them a safe and dry passage: And I, says God, will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them; and I will get me bonour upon Pharaoh and upon all his hoft, upon his chariots and upon his horsemen, and they shall know that I am the Lord. This oracle Moses no doubt communicated to the people to raise their Spirits. And for their farther encouragement, a favourable prodigy happened in their Camp before their eyes. For the pillar of cloud and of fire which was hitherto in their front. VOL. II. removed. frand between the two Camps of the Egyptians and Israelites: the dark fide being turned to the former, and the bright to the latter, in order to keep them as a tit did: for by reason of this interposition, the Egyptians could not overtake the Israelites all the

ensuing night.

IN the Evening, when Moses came to the red-sea, he lifted up his Rod over it, as God had commanded him: And as he had formerly wrought many miracles by the use of this Rod, so now a supernatural effect presently followed upon it: For the waters of the sea divided, and retired to the right and left, rifing and standing up like a wall on each hand, and leaving a way in the bottom wide enough to receive a large front of the host of Israel. Some of the Jewish Doctors have entertained an opinion, that there were twelve distinct paths, one for every Tribe to march in. But though there is no need to conceive fo many feveral divisions, yet it is certain that the passage was very broad: for they entered not till late at night, and were got through (at least the greatest part of them) early next morning: which had been impossible for so great a multitude of people and cattle, had there not been a great deal of room for a speedy march. To facilitate which, God raised a strong East wind, says our Bible; but the LXX better render it, a South wind, which ferved not only to keep the passage open, and to dry the ground, but being in the backs of the Travellers, helped to push them forward; whereas an East wind. would have been too much in their faces, and have rendred their march flow and toilfome.

NOW though the Egyptians were hindred, both by the pillar of cloud, and darkness of the night, from coming

coming up with the Israelites, yet they perceived what course they took. They saw the waters of the fea were retired, and gave them passage, which they might impute to the high winds and fome extraordinary ebb. However being eager in their pursuit, and not doubting but they should overtake them next morning, they ventured in after them, and proceeded till their whole army was got far into the bounds of the sea. And early in the morning God looked upon them through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled them, and took off their chariot wheels: i. e. he turned the fiery part of the pillar towards them, which affrighted them as the face of an angry God. And this appearance being accompanied (as Josephus fays) with a tempest of thunder and lightning, their horses were flartled, and the ground under them growing deep and clammy with the rain, caused their chariots to move heavily.

AT the same time God commanded Moses to stretch out his Rod over the sea, in order to reduce the waters to their natural state. Which done, and the Egyptians perceiving them to slow, they strove against them for a while, but being too far from land, they were finally overwhelmed, and every man of them drowned, not

one escaped.

of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses.

IT is much questioned, both by Jewish and Christian Doctors, whether the Israelites crossed over to the opposite shore of this sea, or whether they only setched a compass, and came out again on the same

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fide. Those who are of this latter opinion, give this account of it, That the ledge of mountains which stopped up their passage by land, running into the sea, they circuited about the end of this bar, and came to land again when they were got beyond it. That the breadth of this Gulf being fifty or threescore English miles, they could not possibly cross it in so short a time as they were in passing, which seems to have been not above seven or eight hours: and that if they had gone over to the Arabian fide, they must have come back again to have pursued their journey towards Canaan. Lastly, that Num. xxxiii. 8. Moses reprefents them, after their deliverance, to be in the Wilderness of Etham, where they were before. On the other hand, those who hold that they went directly over, fay, that the place of their passage was near the point or extremity of this Gulf, between Toro and Suez, where it is not above four miles broad. If this be true, they might easily cross it in one night, and neither be out of their way, nor out of the Wilderness of Etham, which might be so called on both sides this sea, in so narrow a place of it.

THE fame of this deliverance was spread abroad among the heathen, as we read in several places of Holy Scripture, and in other authors. And the Application which St. Paul and the Fathers of our Church have made of it, shews, that they understood it to be a type of our Christian Baptism, and consequently of our Resurrection and immortal life in the Kingdom of God. And this is the reason why it is appointed to be read in the Church at this time. It contains in it the mysteries of our Regeneration to a state of Grace here, and of our passage through the Grave to the glorious Inheritance of our heavenly Canaan.

BY

BY the condition of our nature we are born into this World more wretched flaves than Ifrael in Egypt. The reprobate Spirits are our task-masters, the calamities of life are our burdens, and we are tied and bound with the chains of our own corrupt affections.

IN order to rescue us from this thraldom, we have a greater than Moses, even the Son of God, to lead us, we have his holy Spirit in the use of his Sacraments to regenerate us, and the light of his Gospel is our pillar of fire to guide and direct us in the way of Salvation.

BUT this Salvation cannot be compleated, till we are passed out of this into another World; between which there is a great Gulf, which might justly terrise us, for we should perish in it, had not the Captain of our Salvation made it a safe passage for us.

FOR by a more powerful Instrument than Moses's Rod, even by his Cross, he hath opened a way, and made our Grave the Gate of Eternal Life, through which these Egyptians, these Evils which now pursue us, shall not be able to follow us; they shall be all swallowed up and buried in this Gulf; bitherto shall they come, and no farther.

THIS is all exhibited to us, not only in this type of Israel's passage through the red-sea, but by the well-attested Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Attested by Angels, by Apostles and Evangelists, by St. Paul and others who were once Enemies to it; by an infinite number of miracles wrought in the faith of it, particularly by the Resurrections of others, which were, as I may say, the broad Seal of Heaven, confirming the truth of this great Article of our Religion, that Christ is risen from the dead. In this we are happier than Israel at their coming out of

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Egypt:

Egypt: for though they had general promises from God that he would deliver them; yet they did not see the way how he would do it; that was entirely new to them. When they were distressed by the sea, and unpassable rocky mountains in their front, and the Egyptian army in their rear; when they were even ready to plunge into the waters, rather than be exposed to the swords of their Enemies; then, and not before, it was revealed to them, that those waters should become propitious, and open a way for their escape. They were put into a grievous consternation, before they saw any overture of their deliverance.

BUT the Son of God, who leads us through the waves of this troublesome World, is gone through them before us, and fafely arrived on the Canaan-fide of this sea; whence he shews himself to us, and calls out in the words of Isaiah, saying, Fear not; for I bave redeemed thee: thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. He tells us, 'This body I have taken for your sakes. In it I have suffered all the hardships incident to human nature; I have given it up to scourging and crucifixion, to f death and the grave; and I have raised it again, and crowned it with a glorious immortality, to give you an assurance, by what you see done in my own f person, that I am able to save you in as ample a manner as I have promised. I have instructed you onot to labour for the meat which perisheth, but for f that which nourisheth to everlasting life: not to fear men who can kill the body, but God alone. who can cast both Soul and Body into hell. I have told you, that I am the Resurrection and the Life, and that I will call you out of your Graves at the 6 laft

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last day, and own you for my Brethren before Angels

and men, and carry you to the Kingdom which I

have prepared for you, where you shall for ever

live with me, and all your Enemies shall be put

under your feet. And now you see that I am able

thus highly to exalt you, inasmuch as I have done it.

to your Nature in my own person. Fear not there-

fore to lie down and sleep a while in the dust: for

be affured, that in keeping my commandments you

fhall triumph over death and the grave, and be

' raised again to everlasting Life.'

THIS is briefly the substance of what our blessed Saviour has said and done, to fortisse us against the sears of death, and to teach us, that while we follow him, we are getting from under the tyranny of our spiritual Task-masters, the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and making our way towards a Kingdom, where no evil can approach us. And that though this way lies through many waters of affliction, yet it is safe and sure, and the end of it will be life from the dead.

THE confideration of what has been said, should fill our hearts with a love and reverence of the Divine Majesty, a pious regard for his word, and a grateful sense of his infinite goodness. When Israel had escaped the danger of the sea, and saw their mortal Enemies the Egyptians dead upon the shore, it is affirmed in my Text, that they feared the Lord, and believed him, and his servant Moses: and the next Chapter presents us with their Psalm of praise and thanksgiving for this deliverance: And shall not our Lord's Resurrection, which necessarily infers our own, as I have proved before, shall it not be much more productive of these Graces in our Souls? Let us but heartily

believe this Refurrection, and I cannot see how it is possible for us to speak irreverently of Christ, or lightly to esteem the Evangelists and Apostles, who do not barely teach it, but lay the whole stress of our Christian Faith upon the certainty of it. If Christ be not risen, says St. Paul to the Corinthians, I Cor. xv.

your faith is vain, ye are yet in your fins.

THIS is the reason why the Enemies of our Religion imploy all their engines to ruin this foundation and pillar of our Faith; as well knowing, that if they can but make us Infidels in this point, they totally spoil us of our Christianity; at best they will leave us but the shadow of it, without the substance. But see what melancholick wretches these are, who can wish that the light of the Gospel were turned into darkness. They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. By their fruits we may know them. They are all fuch as neglect and despise the mysteries of our Religion. For whosoever believes that Christ is risen from the dead, will not fail to honour his holy name and his word, and to render him that service which he requires of all true Christians.

2dly, THIS ought to fill our hearts with the praises of God, and a thankful remembrance of all his benefits. Did Israel praise him for their deliverance out of Egypt, and is he not much more to be magnified and exalted for rescuing us from the slavery of Sin and Satan, into the glorious liberty of the children of God? Were they so sensible of the happiness of their escape from those who could only kill the body, and shall not we celebrate him who hath redeemed us from such Enemies as would ruin its Soul and Body to all Eternity? They escaped the Egyptians and the sea: we are ransomed from death and hell.

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They were under the ministry of Moses: we under the conduct and protection of the Son of God. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the Feast. It is by vertue of the blood of this Lamb, without spot or blemish, that we are protected from the sword of the destroying Angel. It is he that hath made a way through the sea, and a path through the deep waters of this mortal state, and turned our grave into a door of hope, an entrance into that heavenly Kingdom which he hath opened to all believes.

HE is the Lord our strength and our song, and he is become our Salvation. He is our God, and the God of our Fathers, we will exalt him. His right hand is become glorious in power, he hath dashed our Enemies to pieces. In the greatness of his excellency he hath overthrown them that role up against us: he fent forth his wrath and confumed them as stubble. Who is like unto our Lord among the Gods! who is like him! glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders! In mercy he will lead forth his Redeemed out of the Grave; he will guide them in his strength to his holy habitation. He shall bring them in and plant them in the mountain of his Inheritance. in the place which he hath made for them to dwell in, in the Sanctuary which his hands have established. And there shall they be with the Lord for ever and ever. To whom with the Father, &c.



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SERMON XXXV.

On the First Sunday after EASTER.

MORNING.

N U M. xvi. 7.

--- Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.



HE Children of Israel were now in the fecond year of their Travels from Egypt to the Land of Canaan; and their present Encampment was at Kadesh Barnea, a place which lay upon the south-border of Pale-

stine; whence they made an invasion upon the Canaunites, thinking to have got a Settlement there; but miscarried in their attempt; and their miscarriage was owing partly to their distrust of the power of God to perform what he had promised them, and partly to their own dissensions and mutinous Spirits: which broke out afterwards to a very dangerous degree in the sedition recorded in this chapter, the greatest, in the opinion of Josephus, that ever was heard of, either among Greeks or Barbarians; and must have thrown this people into irreparable confusion and ruin, had not God interposed and sought for Moses and Aaron,

First Sunday after EASTER.

Aaron, and broke the combinations of those Men who

fomented rebellion against them.

THIS Sedition was headed by Korah a Levite, and Dathan and several others of the Tribe of Reuhen, who had drawn over to their party a formidable number, and, as we may well imagine, a great majority of the People; for their Leaders were not fewer than two hundred and fifty, who were princes of the Afsembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown.

KORAH seems to have been the chief of all the rest. Fosephus fays he was a very wealthy and popular Man, very nearly related to Moses and Aaron, for his Father was their Father's younger Brother. Being thus of the same Tribe and Family, he held it an indignity that he and his Brethren thould live in tubjection, and be excluded the Priest's Office, and be thrust down to inferior laborious services about the Ark and Tabernacle, at the pleature of Moses, as we read in the fourth chapter of this Book; for there we have an account how the feveral branches of the Tribe of Levi were appointed to these services, and the appointment feems to have been made but a little while before this Sedition.

THIS excited the jealoufy and envy of Korab. who complained to his Brethren and Kinsmen the Levites. 'That it was an intolerable uturpation of their common Rights and Privileges, that Muses, ' under pretence of communication with God, should advance himself to the supreme Station of Govern-' ment, which more properly belonged to Dathan and Abiram, Princes of the Tribe of Reuben, which was the first and eldest of all the Tribes of Ifrael. That the said Moses had, in a very arbitrary manner, without the consent and suffrage of the People, entailed

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tailed their Priesthood on his Brother Aaron and his Family, in manifest prejudice and contempt of all others, who had as good a right and title to that Dignity. That it appeared, by the late defeat of their Forces upon the borders of the Cananites, that their Government did not prosper under the administration of Moses and Aaron, who were more likely to kill them all in the wilderness with hunger and thirst and hard travel, than ever to bring them to the possession of a land of rest and plenty, as they had promised them: That therefore it was now high time to change hands, and chuse other Leaders of the People, who might prove more fortunate in their conduct and government of them.'

SUCH were the Allegations of Korah against Moses and Aaron, in which he pretended a zeal for the common good, but his real defign was to get an opportunity, by the favour of the people, to intrude into the office of High-priest. And he so far enflamed the multitude, that they rose against their Governors as one man, and insulted them, and told them to their faces that they took too much upon them, that they had been long enough at the head of affairs, that it was now time to give place to other men, who had as much merit and capacity for government as themselves. They pleaded that all the Congregation was holy: In which they hint at the Custom which had prevailed before that time, and which they would have still continued, that every Master of a Family should offer Sacrifice for his own houshold. Whereas if the Priesthood were confined to one, that one Family would enjoy the offerings and contributions of all the rest. Farther, they affirm that the Lord was among ft

First Sunday after E ASTER. 109

diate directions given from his own mouth; which was true in general, but not in particular; for God did not communicate his pleasure to every individual person of the Israelites, but only to Moses and Aarron, commanding them to declare it to all others.

I confess it had not been safe nor prudent to rely upon the bare word of Moles and Aaron for their veracity in matters of fo high a nature, if their credit had not been supported by plain demonstrations and evident proofs, that the hand and presence of God were with them. But fuch demonstrations they had in abundance; both in their deliverance from the Egyptians, and in the relief of their distresses in the Wilderness, where they were guided, fed and cloathed by the miraculous Providence of God. The Pillar of Fire and of the Cloud, by resting among them, or moving before them, shewed how long they should abide in any place, and when they should leave it. The clear Heavens rained them down Bread, and the Thirsty Rocks poured them out Drink, and their Garments upon their backs waxed not old by forty years wearing. And God suffered none of Moses's words to fall to the ground, but whatever he foretold or promised to the People, it was punctually fulfilled. God was pleased signally to vindicate this his Servant's honour, when any attempt was made to blaft or blemish it. For instance, a little before the Sedition mentioned in this Chapter, when his own Sister Miriam upbraided him with his having married an Ethiopian woman, God struck Miriam with a thorough Leprosie, and refused to heal her, even though Moses prayed for her, till she had done publick Penance for this her Offence. And how he vindicated both him and

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and Aaron against the insults and calumnies of these Mutineers here before us, we shall see presently.

FOR when Moses had heard the Summ of their charge against him, he first of all prostrated himself before God to deprecate his Wrath, and beg his direction and assistance in this dangerous juncture. And then, directing his Discourse to Korah and his Company, he told them, they were wholly in the wrong to condemn him and Aaron for settling the Priest-hood in his Family, since this dignity had been thus disposed of by the direction and appointment of God himself. Cease therefore, says he, your murmuring and tumult upon this occasion, and to-

- morrow come you and Aaron to the Tabernacle.
- and bring each man his Cenfer, with Incenfe and
- · Fire ready to offer before the Lord; and let him
- whose Offering shall be most acceptable to God,
- be declared and established High-Priest in Israel:
- So shall I be cleared of that flander which is cast
- upon me, as if by my own Authority and partial
- favour I had conferred the Priest's Office upon my
- Brother and his Family.'

THE next day the people affembled to be prefent at the Sacrifice, and to see the Controversie decided amongst the Competitors for the Priest-hood.
But before the time of offering Incense, Moses sent
to call Dathan and Abiram with their Company;
who absolutely resused to come to him, and renounced any farther Dominion or Power which he might
exercise over them. Upon hearing of this, he took
divers of the Elders of Israel with him, and went to
them. They being apprised of his coming, attended
about the doors of their Tents, with their Wives,
and Children, and Servants in arms, resolving to oppose

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pose Moses, if he went about to force them to their Duty. Which he perceiving, lifted up his eyes and hands in Prayer to God, faying, 'Thou, Lord, from whom no fecrets are hid, art my witness, that · I have faithfully acted according to thy Will, and have not fought my own pleasure, profit, or glory in the Government of this people. Neither have I ever been partial in the dispensing of places and preferments, nor accepted of Gifts to favour one man more than another. Yet after my utmost care to preserve my Integrity, I am accused of par-' tiality in conferring the Priest-hood upon my Brother for private affection, and not by thy command. Let it now be known to this People, that I am thy Servant, and have done nothing in these ' matters whereof they complain, but as thou haft ' directed me; and according to the uprightness of my Heart in thy ways, do thou make hafte to de-' liver me from the rage of these unreasonable and unrighteous men.'

WHILE Moses was thus pouring out his supplication to God, it was revealed to him that Dathan and Abiram and their Adherents should presently be swallowed up alive of the ground whereon their Tents were then standing. Which Sentence as soon as it was imparted to him, he immediately published in the Camp, warning all those who were mingled with them, to depart from their Tents, and touch nothing of their goods, lest they should be involved in the same Destruction. While he spoke these words, the ground fell a trembling, and began to be agitated after such a manner as the waves of the Sea are by the Wind in a great Tempest. And soon after, with a dreadful noise the Earth opened, and swallow-

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ed up the Seditious, with their Families, their Tents, and all their Goods, so that nothing remained of them; which done, the Gulph in a moment closed up again, so as scarce to leave any sign of what had happened.

THIS prodigy amazed all the Spectators round about, who fled at the cry of the finking Reubenites, as fearing left they should be swallowed up also.

ABOUT the same time Korah and his Company, who were affembled about the door of the Tabernacle, (which was at some miles distance from the Reubenites, for the Hebrew Camp is reckoned to have fill'd a Square of twelve Miles in extent) were Offering up their Incense, to try the strength of Aaron's Election to the Priest-hood, which was quickly determined; for while they were doing this, a Fire iffued forth from the presence of the Lord, and confumed Korah and his two hundred and fifty Affistants, while Moses and Aaron who stood with them, received no manner of hurt. This was a full proof of God's approbation of these his two Servants, as well as of his Anger at the opposite party for their prefumptuous invasion of the Priest's Office. These things being thus accomplished, that the memory of them might endure to all Posterity, God commanded Eleazar the Son of Aaron, to gather up the Censers of the men that were flain, and fasten them to the brazen Altar, to be a standing Monument to the Children of Israel, that no person who is not of the seed. of Aaron should presume to offer Incense before the Lord, left he should be consumed, as were Korah and his Company, for the like prefumption.

AND now one would think, after such a manifest declaration of God's will in favour of Aaron's

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Priesthood, he should have enjoyed it ever after without the least contradiction. Yet for all this, a new Sedition presently broke out among the People, with greater Fury than before. For on the morrow, not only a party or fet of leading men, but the whole Congregation of Israel clamoured against Moses and Aaron, crying out upon them, that they had killed the People of the Lord. This was an aftonishing instance of their incurable hardness, on whom the late Judgments, so plainly supernatural and sent from God. had made no deeper impressions. Moses and Aaron had no way left for the faving of their Lives, but the immediate Succour of Heaven, which appeared that moment in their Defence. God sent his destroying Angel among the Assembly, with such a Pestilence, as presently laid fourteen thousand seven hundred of them dead upon the Spot, and had swept the rest away, if Aaron, by the direction of Moses, had not ran into the midit of the Congregation, and offered Incense between the living and the dead, which put a stop to the farther progress of the Pestilence, and was a third proof of the Divine Authority of his Priest-hood, in opposition to all others.

BUT to make a full end of this dispute, and cut off all possible pretence of future Seditions and Factions about it, God was pleased to add one more to the former Miracles which he had wrought upon this occasion: which was this. He commanded Moses to call the heads of the Tribes together, and direct them and Aaron to bring every one a Rod, whereon the Name of each Tribe should be written, and Aaron's upon his, promising that the Priest-hood should remain with them, in whose rod God should show any fign. Which condition being allowed by all, both Vol. II.

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they and Aaron brought their Rods with their Inscriptions. These Moses laid in the Tabernacle, and the next morning brought them forth (which were eafily known by the People to be the same which the Princes of the Tribes had brought, by the marks which they had made upon them) and they faw that twelve of them remained just the same as they were the day before, when Moses took them: But out of Aaron's Rod there grew Branches and Blossoms, and which is more to be wondered at, it bare ripe Almonds, being of the wood of the Almond-Tree, The people amazed at the strangeness of this Spectacle, changed their hatred against Moses and Aaron into admiration of the Judgment which God had given in their Fayour, and thenceforth fully acquiesced in the settlement of the Priesthood in Aaron's Family. Whose Rod, by the Divine Command, was laid up in the most Holy place of the Tabernacle, and kept there for a long time, though how long is not certain.

AND thus far this History was peculiar to the Jews; let us now see how far it may concern us Christians. It was a Christian which said, No man taketh the honour of Priesthood to himself, but he whose wocation and appointment to it, is of God, as was Aaron's. Heb. v. 4. In which affertion he seems to many to be much beside the truth; for thousands of Christians have taken upon them to Minister in Holy things, even in the most Solemn and Sacred Mysteries of Religion, without any Authority or Commission for so doing, beside the inward motion of their own Spirit. But I suppose our Author means, that no man arrogated this Sacred Office to himself in his time, nor ought to do it at any time. Against this

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it will be objected, that all this must be restrained to the Jewish Occonomy, and that the case is much altered in our Christian dispensation, wherein Christ hath made all his fervants Kings and Priests unto God. But if those who plead for this Universal Privilege, will arrogate no more of the Sacerdotal, than they do of the Regal Authority (and I suppose they will see reason to lay no claim to the latter) then they will be content to expect both Dignities in another World. And indeed to the future Kingdom of Christ they must have recourse for these Dignities. who will take the proposition in an Universal Latitude: though in a limited sense I confess it may be true of every good Christian in the present State, that he has gained the Dominion over his Lufts and Passions, and all sinful Temptations, and daily offers up to God an acceptable Sacrifice of Prayers and Praifes; and so far he may be faid in a Spiritual sense to be both King and Prieft. But then this Spiritual Privilege gives him no claim to the external Acts of either of these Offices: And so the Text which is alledged in support of fuch claim, makes nothing for the Sacerdotal Power of those who alledge it.

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OUR Author subjoyns, That even Christ, our great High-Priest, in his State of Subjection and Humiliation, assumed not this Dignity at his own pleasure, but waited upon him who had made him a promise of old, that he should be a Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedeck. Which was not accomplished, till he offered up himself a Sacrifice for us all upon the Cross, rose again from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and sate down on the right hand of God to make continual Intercession for us. But during his Ministry upon Earth, he was so far from meddling

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meddling with the Office of Jewish Priests (though they were grown very corrupt, and upon that account often reproved by him; as their Ancestors had been by other great Prophets before him) yet he was so far a friend to the Office it self, that he shewed himself ready to support the Honour and Interests of it. And therefore when he had cleansed some Lepers, he ordered them to go and shew themselves to the Priests, and make that Oblation which

Moses had injoyn'd upon such Occasions.

I wish this distinction were duly made between the Office of Priests, and their own personal Demerits and Infirmities. People then would not entertain fuch prejudices as they commonly take up against the very name of the Priesthood: In which they may think they are warranted, by many severe things which are said against Priests, by the Prophets of the Old, and the Evangelists of the New Testament. But these things were said against unworthy men, without any defign to abate the respect due to the Office. Korab and his Company thought it very honourable, otherwise they would not have contended so warmly for a share in it. And there are but two things which can reflect dishonour upon it. One is, the misconduct of those who are duly and regularly invested in this Office; but wanting sufficient Abilities, or Diligence, or exemplary Piety and Virtue, exercise it to no good purpose in the World. The other way of dishonouring it, is, the invasions of those who have no right to it; which Prophanation is sufficiently condemned by the Judgment recorded in this Chapter; whereby God has declared, that he is highly offended with those, who prostitute the Dignities

First Sunday after EASTER. 117

nities of Religion to the service of Ambitious or Covetous ends.

LET us hear the two grand Objections of the Malecontents in this chapter, against the peculiarity of the Priesthood. First, Korab calls it an Usurpation over the Rights and Liberties of the People, who had so much of the Presence and Power of God among them, that they had no occasion for the ministry of men to guide and instruct them. They were all the Bleffed of the Lord, and what could the Bleffings of men add to them? But Moses tells them, they took too much upon them to fay this, fince God, who knew best how to dispense his own spiritual Gifts, thought fit to convey them by the hands of men to men. This is the opposite Doctrine to that of Korab, and yet Korab's is derived down to our days, and by many espoused and strenuously defended. What need an Order of men, fay they, to teach Religion amongst us, where the Knowledge of it may be at-' tained by Books and otherwise, without them?' By the same kind of reasoning they persuade themselves, that there is no efficacy in Intercessions, Absolutions, Sacraments, or any other parts of the facerdotal Office, and that they may spend the hours of publick worship to as good purpose among their Books or their Friends, as in the Congregation of Christ's Church. I am afraid the Devil has emboldened millions of Souls, by fuch arguments as these, to despise the means of Grace, and with the unprofitable Servant to die in the neglect of those Talents, which God had graciously afforded them for a profitable Imployment, and by the Improvement of which they might entitle themselves to the rewards of his heavenly Kingdom.

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SECONDLY, Dathan and Abiram rebell against Moses and Aaron, because they had not brought them into the Land of Canaan, whither they had undertaken to lead them. And this is the great Objection which the enemies of our Christian Religion make against it, that it does not derive upon the Professors of it, the Bleffings which it promifes them. Some fuffer at the hands of their Fellow-christians a great deal of cruelty, foul dealing and oppression, as bad as they could expect from the greatest Infidels, and contrary to that brotherly Love and Charity which is injoyned by the Laws of Christ. Others find nothing of that inward Joy and Comfort, which are faid to be the Fruits of the Christian Spirit. But both these Objectors must acknowledge, that the Laws of our Religion, if duly observed, are very well adapted to procure the Bleffings which they complain they want: And therefore the want of them must be imputed to our imperfect obedience. We suffer injuries from one another, because, generally speaking, we are Christians but in name, not in deed. And for the same reason we find Darkness and Melancholy, instead of spiritual Light and Joy within us, because we are not careful to keep a good Conscience, nor maintain a constant Communion with God, the Fountain of all Comfort, by diligently using those means of Grace which he has appointed for that end. And therefore we are as unjust and unthankful in murmuring against Christ, as Dathan and Abiram were in accusing Moses and Aaron, that they had not put them in possession of the promised Land. They were upon the brink of it, and had lately got footing in it, if their atheistical and rebellious Spirit had not hindered them. But this threw them back

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back into the Wilderness again, and doom'd them to a farther wandering the space of thirty eight years in it. They desperately wished they had died before they had seen so much as the borders of Canaan, and God took them at their word, and suffered none of these Murmorers to inherit his Promise. So that not Moses and Aaron, as they falsely complain, but their own Provocations of God were the cause, that they were consumed in the Wilderness.

WHEREFORE let us, who have feen the false Steps which they made, learn obedience by the things which they suffered. Let us take heed, lest a Promise being made us of entring into the Kingdom of Christ, any of us should fall short of it, through the like infidelity, ingratitude, and contempt of the divine Goodness, which they were guilty of. have too many such Infidels and Scoffers at the prefent method of Salvation among us; too many who disparage and lessen it by endless contentions about Who are the particular Guides to it: too many who repine at the length and hardships of the way, and make it much longer and harder by fuch repinings. Let us be careful to avoid the errors of these Men. thankfully embracing, and by Faith holding fast the Promises which our Lord hath given us, of entring into his heavenly Kingdom. Let us with Humility and godly Zeal fit down contented with those means of Grace, which he hath established among us, and willingly receive our Portion from the hand which he hath appointed to dispense it, not running here and there, like men who can never be satisfied. Let us not dishenour our Master by calling him an austere man, nor his work by bearing it as a grievous burden; but meekly, patiently, and cheerfully follow him in

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the way wherein he leads us, until we have gone over the wilderness of this mortal Life, and are past the Valley of Achor, the Grave of all our Infirmity and Corruption, where we shall strip off our Mortality, and be clothed with Garments which never wax old, and be received to the holy Patriarchs, and faithful Servants of God, in a far better Country than any earthly Canaan or Paradise, even in that Heaven which Christ hath opened to all Believers, and where he now liveth and reigneth with the Father, &c.





SERMON XXXVI.

On the First Sunday after EASTER.

EVENING.

N U M B. xxii. 18.

And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his bouse full of filver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.



F the King of Moab had known the mind of God, and his injunction to Israel in favour of the Moabites, as it is recited in Deut. ii. 9. he would not have been fo

alarmed at the Israelites army, when they came upon his borders. For there they are forbidden to molest the Moabites or Ammonites, or to offer to disposses them of their Countries; in consideration no doubt of their kindred to Israel, being descended from Lot, the nephew of Abraham by his brother Haran. This injunction they obeyed, as we read Judg. xi. 2 Chron. xx. And this King might eafily have understood their refolution to observe it, had he acted ingenuously, and treated them with that friendship and hospitality which

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which became a kinsman. But instead of that, he entertained suspicious and odious apprehensions of them, and sollicited the powers of Earth and Hell to bring them to destruction. First he consederated with the Midianites against them; then he had recourse to the magick arts of Balaam, a samous Sorcerer, to bewitch and insatuate them with his enchantments. To him he sends an embassy of Moabites and Midianites, persons of good rank and reputation, with a handsome present, and a high compliment to this salse Prophet, that he had the power of life and death in his own hands. I am persuaded, said the King, that be whom thou blesses, is blessed; and he whom thou eurses, is sursed.

THESE arguments failed not to work upon Balaam's ambition and avarice; so that he resolved to do his utmost in what was required, and presently he confulted his oracle concerning the journey and bufiness which he was about to undertake. Whether upon this occasion he invocated the true God, or an evil spirit, I cannot certainly determine. You hear in my Text how he calls the God of Ifrael, the Lord my God. Whence learned men suppose, that Balaam was once a holy man; but that he degenerated, and corrupted religion with the evil arts of divination and footh-faying. But whoever he invocated, this is certain, that God filenced his familiar spirits, and answered himself. And his answer at this time was in the negative. Thou shalt not go with these men; thou shalt not curse this people, for they are blessed.

IN reporting God's answer to the messengers of Balak, Balaam supprest part of it. The Lord, says he, refuseth to let me go with you. But he did not tell them that God's reason was, because he had blessed Israel.

And

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And they, when they came to their mafter, were as partial in reporting Balaam's answer to them. Balaam, faid they, refuseth to come with us: but they did not tell him how God had forbidden him: that they con-

cealed and kept to themselves.

THIS mif-led the King to think that the Prophet only wanted a stronger invitation to bring him. Whereupon he sent him a richer present, by the hands of more honourable persons, with a promise of high preferment, even the highest that he could give, or the other could ask. To this message Balaam answers in the words of my Text: If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.

IN which words we may see the divine Omnipotency, and the subjection of all other powers to God. Which is the best reason in the World, why we should have none other Gods but one, and the best argument to persuade us to love, honour, and fear him above all things, and in all injurious attempts which men and devils shall make against us, to put our trust

in God.

If, BALAAM confesses the divine Omnipotency, which forcibly reftrained him from curfing Ifrael: I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more. This founds like the resolution of a pious man, whose answer to any finful temptation is, I cannot, i. e. I must not, I will not do this. For the' he has the natural faculties of speaking and acting, yet he holds himself sufficiently restrained from using them, in all cases which are contrary to the Will and Commandment of God. His Laws are the measure of such a man's Power, who can act only according to the truth of God, and do nothing against it.

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ON the contrary, wicked men fet no such bounds to their words and actions, but yield their members instruments of unrighteousness and unholiness. They make no more account of the divine Laws, than if they were so many spiders webbs, but abandon themfelves to the sway of their own carnal wills and affe-Etions. They are of the number of those who say, Our tongues, and hands, and estates are our own, we will fay and do what we please; who shall controul us?' They will feek to turn the unchangeable God from his own purposes, and importune him to grant them their own finful defires, and put such a construction upon his words as will render them favourable to their own defigns. Such men as these the Scripture calls, Sons of Belial, men of unbounded licence and latitude, who live by no Law but that of their own Will, and have no more Religion but what will comply with their felf-love.

SUCH a man was Balaam, who by his answer here in my Text seems to be pious, and endued with the fear of God, and yet he was far from it. For when he fays he could not go beyond the word of the Lord, he means that his tongue was forcibly restrained from curfing Israel, as I noted before, and as his following words and carriage fully declare. For he presently invites these second messengers to tarry all night with him, that they might hear the result of his farther application to God about their business. Which fufficiently proves that he had a base wicked heart. For to ask God's permission to curse Israel, when he had been told before, that he should not curse them, for they were blessed, was a gross breach of the laws of Piety and Charity. And yet he laboured to the very end of his life to do them this in-

First Sunday after EASTER. 125 jury; so little regard had he to the Will of God, of the welfare of mankind.

BUT what if Balaam had been so much master of his own tongue, as to have pronounced a curse upon Israel, should they have fared ever the worse for his imprecations? No certainly; not so long as they pleased God, and did nothing to forfeit his bleffing and protection. It is well known indeed, that God often permits wicked Men and Devils to injure his best Servants in their body, estate, and reputation, of which we have a famous instance in the history of holy Job. And that witchcrafts are practifed in the World, and have had malignant influences, hath been proved to a demonstration, so often as that none will deny it, except a fort of People who will not believe their own senses. But it is as certain, that God commonly protects his Servants from suffering any harm by the curses of Satan's instruments, according to the testimony of his own Word, which assures us. that unmerited curses shall not be inflicted on those against whom they are uttered. For if they were, the plagues and mischiefs which are daily imprecated by millions of hellish tongues, would soon bring the World to utter destruction.

WE conclude therefore that Balaam's Curse, if it had been pronounced, should not have prevailed against God's Blessing. However, God would not suffer him to pronounce it, to the end that all the World might take notice of his sovereignty over all creatures, and that whenever he pleases, he obliges all things, even the tongues and works of his most violent enemies, to speak his praise. For this purpose he wrought his wonders in Egypt, in the Red-sea, and in the Wilderness, to make his name great among the

Gentiles,

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Gentiles, that they might be reclaimed from their Idolatry, or left inexcusable in the practice of it, when they saw how much the God of Israel was above all their gods: that he only was Almighty, that his Command prevailed over all, and nothing was able to resist or contradict it. A noble Evidence of this truth stands here before us. The King acknowledges his Soothsayer to have the gift of doing all that was possible to be done by blessing and cursing; and the Soothsayer assures the King, that he was not able to bless or curse, otherwise than as the God of Israel was pleased to permit him. Which concludes as strongly as can be, that this God was superior to the Soothsayer, and to all the infernal powers which assisted him.

THIS conclusion may serve as a perpetual fountain of comfort to all God's People, a cordial in all their afflictions, an argument of faith, hope, and trust in God, when they consider that they are children of such a Father, servants of such a Lord, as is the great Monarch and Emperor of the Universe, whose power is in himself, who wants none to assist him, for all things obey him, being created and supported by him, who orders all things with a nod and a word. And tho' fome of his creatures have rebelled against him, yet that is no argument of any defect, weakness, or iniquity in the Lord, but only of degeneracy and blindness in the rebellious servants. It being known and approved by the best experience, that they who study the nature of the divine Majesty, and most frequently approach him in spiritual Communion, who are most observant of his Laws, and careful to conform themselves to the pattern of his holiness and goodness, have the greatest love, esteem, and veneration for him, and are most apt to induce others to love him,

by recommending his excellent and gracious properties in their own life and practice: whereas those who have rebelled against him, have been strangers to him; their disaffection is founded in ignorance, and their ignorance has grown from omissions of those duties which were appointed to keep up a lively sense

of God upon their minds.

THIS is visibly the cause of Atheism in our own World, this neglect in Men to acquaint themselves with God by the use of those means which he hath prescribed for this purpose. And if we knew the state of the World of Spirits as well as our own, we should certainly find the like neglects to have been the occasion of their ignorance of God; and their ignorance to have been the cause of their fall and apossasse from him.

W E must have a care what opinion we entertain of the condition of those which were once holy Angels, but are now reprobate Spirits. We are apt to conceive of them as living in the Presence of God. feeing the glories of his Majesty, knowing the excellencies of his nature, and readily performing the duties of their feveral stations; and so no doubt they did at the beginning. But afterwards, by their neglects of fuch duties, they became more alienated and removed from the divine Presence, and more insenfible of his glorious and excellent Attributes. For I am persuaded they did not fall suddenly, but gradually, in proportion to their neglects of the service of their heavenly Lord and Father. And I believe of the Angels of Heaven in general, that by exercifing their duties towards God, they improve in their love and knowledge of him, as much as we men do upon earth; and under such improvement, it is impossible

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possible for them to fall: therefore these that sell must abate in their service of God, and consequently in their love and knowledge of him; and so grew ignorant of him, or in other words, laboured under a dismal eclipse of his divine Excellencies. Which so long as they are apprehended by any creature of God, it is impossible for him to sink in his esteem of the Being in whom they reside, and from whence they slow. For it being impossible for the Creator to degenerate, the degeneracy which causes this change must be in the creature; which is the point which I at first afferted.

And therefore, Secondly, THE unchangeable sufficiency and readiness of God to save us, is our best, and indeed our only fecurity against the legions of wicked men and devils which furround us, and are ready to devour us. For by his Omniscience he fees all their defigns, and by his omnipotence he controuls them at pleasure. And it is his pleasure many times to deliver his Servants from the rage of the ungodly, so that they cannot open their mouths, nor lift up their hands against them. And when for wife and good reasons, which I cannot now stand to enumerate, he permits the enemy and avenger to chastise his People, this should only drive them nearer to God, with the greater zeal to implore his fa-vour and protection, fince in all circumstances it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in men, it is better to fall into his hands who spares when we deserve punishment, and in the midst of judgment remembers mercy, than to become a prey to-inexorable Spirits whose tender mercies are cruel. If God be on our fide, we need not fear what they can do against us: for they can do no more than

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than what our Protector sees fit, and that will be no more than what shall redound to our benefit in the end, so long as we study to serve and please God.

ACCORDINGLY we find that David and other holy Men, when they had suffered much from the rage of Satan and his Instruments, humbly confess that they were delivered up to such sufferings for the punishment of their sins, because they had not kept God's Laws so well as they should have done. They thank him for his corrections, whereby they were reclaimed to a better course of life, and they exhort others upon such occasions to be assured, and trust their experience for it, that God is the most vigilant Keeper, and most gracious Governour and Preserver of mankind.

AND the Almighty was pleased to justifie his dealings with his People in later times, by putting them in mind of this very dispensation here before us. Mic. vi. 5. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him-that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord. 6 Remember how I would not suffer Balaam to utter imprecations, nor practise enchantments against you, tho' he endeavoured all he could to curse you, but I turned his curse into a bleffing. Confider this, and fee how righteous I have been, and true to the Covenant which I made with your Fathers: how punctually I fulfilled my Promifes to them, in bringing them into the land wherein ye ' now dwell, notwithstanding all those impediments which stood in their way, partly from the opposition of their enemies, and partly from their own ' fins.' Such remembrances are very proper to give us a right notion of God and of our felves, to let Vol. II. K us

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us see his infinite Wisdom, Power and Goodwill to save us, and our own continual want of such a Saviour.

THE King of Moab was a man of a dark genius, and betook himself to impious means to ward off the danger which he apprehended from Israel. Had he dealt openly and candidly in this business, he had saved a great deal of honour, treasure, and pains, which were all thrown away upon a base and ill-concerted project. To hire the legions of darkness for his confederates, was fouler dealing, than to shoot poisoned arrows in a battle. But the righteous God blasted this conspiracy, and it ended in the shame and consulion of the Projectors. The watchman of Israel had his eye upon them, and discovered them, and deseated their counsels.

THIS should be a warning to us all, never to pursue any end by unrighteous means. A good man will not transgress the laws of Piety and Justice, tho' it were to fave his life, and every thing that is dear to him in this World: he will not treat any man as his enemy upon meer suspicions and jealousies, as Balak treated the People of Israel: Much less will he make a league with hell, as this King did, and apply to Sorcerers and Enchanters for his deliverance. is amazing to think how any man can be so infatuated, as to hope for good from those infernal Spirits, who are implacable enemies to all Mankind; and if at any time they feem to do them service, have no other design in it, but to impose upon them, and ruin them to all eternity. Tho' we need not look fo far forward, for we commonly see their votaries reduced in this World to the greatest misery; and that by the just Judgment of God, who is the fountain of all goodness,

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goodness, and will not endure the reprobate Spirits to rob him of this honour, but sooner or later will convince all the World, that they who trust in lying vanities, for sake their own mercies.

INNUMERABLE are the Scriptures which teach this doctrine, and the experience which we have of God's governing the World, doth abundantly confirm the truth of it. And we have moreover another fort of unexceptionable Evidence, such confessions I mean, as this in my Text, to assure us, that God reigneth over all, and that no created powers, visible or invisible, can act beyond the limits which he assigns them. I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more.

AND this suggests another observation, which I cannot omit in this place, viz. the obstinacy of Balaam and fuch like wicked men, that when they know the mind of God, as he did, yet they will not obey it without compulsion, but still seek to go their own way, and do their own pleasure. Balaam knew very well by divine Revelation, that it was the Will of God, that Israel should be blessed; notwithstanding which, he used all possible endeavours to curse them. And just so the men of the World persist in the gratification of their finful lufts, against all the checks which they receive from the Word of God, the preaching of his Ministers, and the remonstrances of their own Conscience. So that however they may confess God in their words, and in some of their works too, yet in cases where their favourite lusts are concerned, they deny him, and depose him, as far as in them lies, from having any dominion or authority over them, yielding obedience to no Law but that of their own corrupt affections. But to proceed.

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IT must needs be a great comfort to the poor Servants of God, to hear this Diviner say, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I can do no more for him, than God shall permit me to do. This is a fair confession of Israel's enemy, that all the power, authority, and riches in the World cannot hurt those whom God hath undertaken to protect. Thus afterwards, in the days of Jehoshaphat King of Judab, when the posterity of these very Moabites and Ammonites invaded his Kingdom with a great army, and he besought God, saying, Behold the children of Ammon, and Moab, and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not: Behold, I fay, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O God, we have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee. Then God answered him by Jahaziel the Prophet, saying, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's. And he was pleased to grant them a fignal victory, 2 Chron. xx. And thus again, 2 Chron. xxxii. when Sennacherib invaded Judah, Hezekiah spake comfortably to his People, faying, Be ftrong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there are more with us, than with bim. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles for us.

THESE good Kings had a true faith in God, and a right fense of his Power, that having him on their side, they had nothing to fear from the multitudes of their enemies. And this their Piety availed more to the subduing of their enemies, than if they

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had affaulted them with superior arms and forces. By the same Faith their Ancestor David slew the Philistines champion, and routed their army, with much the same words in his mouth, The battle is the Lord's, who saveth not by sword nor spear: he will give you into our hands. Such victories were the rewards of their Leaders Faith and Piety. But to return.

A house full of silver and gold, says Balaam, cannot make me go beyond the word of the Lord. He means in point of ability, not of will, as I noted at first. For a much less sum excited his zeal to do all he could. both against Israel, and against the express Command of God. And I wish he had been the first and last Prophet, that was retained by the wages of unrighteousness in a wrong cause. But alas! his successors have been very numerous, and may be heard of in all Histories, particularly in many places of facred Writ; where we are told, that for very mean rewards, fuch as handfulls of barley and morfels of bread, they would bless or curse, save or destroy, and make the same word to be true or falle, as it was most pleasing to their benefactors. Preaching was their delight, and in the name of the Lord, but he charges them with imposing and deceiving in his name; for they called evil good, and good evil; they justified the wicked. and condemned the righteous; they healed the hurt of the People flightly, meer quack-falvers, crying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace. Whereas they should have gone to the bottom of the malady. and have laid open those Sins before the people, for which God had a controversie with them, and for which he made their Heavens darkness, and their Earth a desert.

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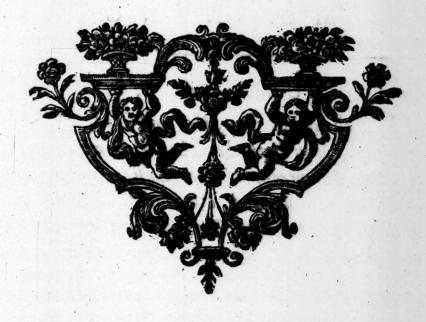
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LET us resolve in the words of my Text (for we may use the words of Balaam, with a little change, and in a better sense) that a house full of silver and gold shall not prevail with us to transgress the word of the Lord: that we will not be drawn by any temptations of ambition, avarice, or of pleafing our selves or other men, to displease God: but order our lives honestly and uprightly, by the rule of his Commandments, acknowledging him to be our supreme Lord, whose voice we are bound to obey in the first place, and believing that he is able to protect us and provide for us, in the way of his service, however difficult or impolitick it may feem, and that he will give us all those bleffings of this life and a better, which he has promifed as the rewards of our obedience.

THUS if we contain our felves within the bounds of God's word, making it the law of our thoughts, words, and actions, we shall be the constant objects of his care, the children of his Family; we shall abide under the defence of the Most High, and rest under the shadow of the Almighty: his faithfulness and truth shall be our shield and buckler. He will lay his restraints upon all our enemies ghostly and bodily, as he did upon Balaam, that they shall not have the power to curse us; they shall not be able to smite us with the tongue nor with the fword; for God who hath the over-ruling of all mens faculties, will turn their curses into bleffings. He will not suffer enchantments to prevail against Jacob, nor divinations against Israel. The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, who is their strength in the time of trouble. He shall deliver them in fix troubles, and in seven there shall no evil touch them. In famine he will redeem

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them from death, and in war from the power of the fword. He will rescue them from the hand of the wicked, and because their ways please him, he will make their enemies to be at peace with them. Finally, He will bless them in him, in whom men of all nations and languages shall be blessed, even Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, &c.



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SERMON



SERMON XXXVII.

On the Second Sunday after EASTER.

MORNING.

NUMB. xxiii. 7, 8.

And he took up his Parable, and said, Balak the King of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the Mountains of the East, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, desie Israel. How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I desie whom the Lord hath not desied?



T is the Observation of learned men, That Moses, in these Books of the Travels of Israel, hath recorded the Transactions only of three of those forty years which the Israelites spent in their wander-

ings in the Wilderness. In the two first from their coming out of Egypt, they were sufficiently imployed in receiving the Laws of Religion and Civil Government, in seeing the wonderful works of God, who provided a constant supply of bread and water for above a million of People, with their slocks and herds,

herds, in a barren and dry land; and in making their way over the Deserts of Arabia, through much opposition of men and beasts, 'till they arrived at Kadesh Barnea, which lay upon the Border of the Land of Canaan. There they were directed by the Oracle of God, to look into their promised Land, and begin to take possession of it: But they fet about the work with fuch an unhappy Spirit of murmuring and fedition against God and their Leaders, that God was provoked to swear in his wrath, that these Rebels should die in the wilderness. In order to which, he led them back again towards Edom and the Red Sea, and caused them to make a tour of thirty eight years length about various Countries, till the men who had provoked him, were by time and travel worn out and confumed from off the face of the Earth.

HIS manner of leading them was this. He caused the Signal of his glorious Presence to hover over the Tabernacle, which was always placed in the midst of their Camp. This Signal appeared like a cloud by day, and like fire by night; and when it was raised considerably above the Tabernacle, and moved forward, the People struck their Tents, and followed it, which way foever it led them: But when it rested upon the Tabernacle, they continued in their Camp; whether it was a day, a month, or a year that it so rested, they moved not till they saw it in motion, as we read Numbers ix. Now there is no question but this Signal sometimes rested several years together; Aben Ezra says eighteen in one place. This is the reason both of the course and the length of the Israelites wanderings in the wilderness: were

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were always guided, both as to time and place, by this Divine Signal.

WHICH had now brought them a second time to the borders of Canaan, in the fortieth year of their Travels. The place of their present Encampment was in the Plains of Moab near the River Jordan, and opposite to Jericho a City on the Canaan side of the River. Here they pitched from Beth-Jesimoth unto Abel-Shittim, and continued here till under the conduct of Joshua they passed over Jordan to the City aforesaid.

THE great appearance which the Camp of Ifrael made, and the reputation which the fuccess of their arms against Arad, Sibon, and Og, three neighbouring Kings, had lately got them, struck terror into the Moabites and Midianites, in whose neighbourhood they now were: Though they invaded nothing which at that time did properly belong to Moab. (For though they encamped in the Plains so called, yet they came into them by right of the Victory which they had obtained over Sihon the Amorite; for Sihon had before won them by like means from the Children of Moab and Ammon. And therefore when the King of Ammon, three hundred years after, reclaimed these fields of Israel in the days of Jephtha, Judges xi. Jephtha returned him this answer, that Ifrael took not away any land of Moab or Ammon; but fent a civil message to the King of Moab for leave to pass peaceably through his Country, and pay for what they wanted: Which when refused, they fetched a compass by the east quarter of the land of Moab, and came about, and pitched on the outfide of the River Arnon, but came not within the border

of Moab: for Arnon was the utmost border of Moab towards Palestine, as it is likewise said Numbers xxi. 13.

AND indeed God had forbidden Israel, as I noted before, to distress the Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites in their progress towards Canaan, because they were all collateral branches of the same family; the Edomites from Esau, and the Moabites and Ammonites from the Children of Lot, were all sprung from Terab the Father of Abraham; so that there was a near kindred and consanguinity between them.

HOWEVER Balak the King of Moab apprehending that the vast number of Israelites would ravage his Country, if it were to get no more than necessary provisions, consulted with his neighbours and confederates the Midianites, by what means they might remove them to a farther distance. And certainly concluding that their united forces would be far inferior to Israel in Battle, they resolved to stir up the invisible World, the World of Spirits, against them. To this purpose they sent an Embassy to Balaam, the most celebrated Magician and Dealer with familiar Spirits in those times. He dwelt in Pethor a City of Mesopotamia near the River Euphrates, about three days journey from these Plains of Moab; and was thought to have such an interest in the invisible Powers, as to be able by their means to fave or destroy Mankind at his pleasure. Such Opinion had Balak of the efficacy either of his Curse or his Blesfing. Now certain it is, that the most true and holy Prophets were often enabled by God to do wonders both these ways. And where can we find a greater instance of this Power, than in Moses himself, the writer of this History?

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TO the like power the Magicians laid claim, though they fought to evil spirits by spells and charms and other wicked arts, for the exercise of it. And it must be confessed that the Gods of the Heathen. i. e. the World of degenerate Spirits, have many times wrought furprifing effects, above, and contrary to, the course of Nature, in compliance with the mysterious ceremonies and addresses of their Votaries. Venomous creatures have, by the voice of the Charmer, been disarm'd of their power to sting; Lions and Tygers have been made to fly before the weakest and most defenceless of Mankind, and sometimes to come trembling and fawning, and cast themselves at their Feet. The animate and inanimate part of the World have been strangely transformed and altered by the same means. Men have been held by invisible Hands, and Champions by the power of Magick have been struck with panick Fears, and fled when none has purfued them.

THIS encouraged Balak and the Midianites to rely more upon the Sorceries of Balaam, than upon all the military force which they could raise against Israel. And fain would the Magician have given them all the affistance which his art could afford, both for the love which he bare to them, as also for the aggrandizing of his Fame, and the obtaining the rich Presents and Rewards which they offered him. But God, who makes all things obedient to his own Will, would suffer none of Balaam's familiar Spirits to attend him upon this Occasion, or pay any regard to his infernal Ceremonies and Incantations; but gave him directions, from first to last, how to behave himfelf in this affair, and forced that tongue of his to bless Ifrael, which sought all opportunities to curse them.

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them. Three times did he sacrifice upon seven Altars, offering a Bullock and a Ram upon each Altar, feeking by these Sacrifices, with his inchantments, mutterings and invocations of Spirits joined with them, to procure the utter confusion of Israel. But to the aftonishment of Moab and Midian, when they expected to hear Imprecations upon their Enemies, and well knew that their Diviner defired nothing more, they heard his unwilling Lips pronounce the greatest Blessings, and utter the most ardent vows for Israel's Prosperity throughout all Generations. This explains those excuses which he made to Balak, when he blamed him for acting fo contrary to what he had defired of him. How, fays he, shall I curse whom God bath not cursed? Behold, I have received a Commandment to bless, and be bath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel. Which was as much as to fay, that he had try'd the utmost which his Art could do, to bring out fuch a Sentence as might gratifie his Friends, but when he came to pronounce it, the power of God was fo strong in him, as quite changed his Words, and forced him to declare a contrary Sentence. So that it was not he. but God in him, which poured out the Bleffings which they heard, upon Israel.

70 SEP HUS introduces him, making this Apology to Balak for his disappointment. 'Think you it lies in our power, when we are called upon

to pronounce the fate of Men and Nations, to de-

' clare or suppress things just as we please? No; 'tis

God that speaks in us: He forces us to utter his sa-

' cred Will and Pleasure, and publishes those Oracles

by our Mouths, which we neither understand, nor

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ever thought of. I have not forgotten the request of the Midianites; and I came on purpose to execute what they defired of me: But God's Power is above my Will. I had resolved, as your fincere Friend, and with an eye to your service, to have said every thing just contrary to what you have heard. But when God sees fit to make us his instruments, he 6 foon becomes absolute Master of our Faculties. Be-· lieve me, I had determined with my felf, to speak onothing at all to the advantage of Ifrael; nor was it ever in my thoughts to enumerate the Bleffings, which, as you have heard, shall be conferred upon 6 that Nation: But because God hath decreed them a superlative encrease of felicity and glory, he overruled my Tongue to pronounce those auspicious Words.

THIS is a very just account of Balaam's Sentiments and Affections in this matter. He fully defigned all happiness to Moab and Midian, and all misfortune to Ifrael; but God fo guided his Tongue, that it spoke every thing contrary to what he intended. Most evident it is, that in his heart he was Israel's implacable enemy to his last breath: For when he found that he could not prevail against them by his Sorceries and Imprecations, when he was about to take his leave of Balak and the Princes of Midian, and to return home, he condoled with them that his endeavours had been so far from doing them any service, and told them he had one piece of advice to recommend to them at parting; which was this: That the Midianites should chuse out the fairest of their Daughters, and adorn them to the best advantage, and fend them into the Camp of Ifrael. Let these fair Damsels, says he, wander about like Strangers

Strangers who would gratifie their curiofity, but not neglect their opportunities to infinuate into the conversation of their youngest and bravest Men: whom as soon as they perceive to be enamoured and sond of their company, let the Maidens seign they are in haste to return home. And being desired to stay, let them not yield, except the Israelites will be persuaded to forsake their Laws, and the Worship of their God, and to sacrifice to the Gods of the Midianites and Moabites: For by this means they will incense God's Wrath against themselves, and so

'you may obtain some advantage over them.'

THIS advice the Midianites well approved of, and presently chose out a competent number of their fairest Damsels, attired them most agreeably, taught them what they should do; and sent them into the Camp of Ifrael. They behaved as they had been infiructed, and the success was as good as they could wish. The Israelites, ensnared with their beauty, confented to do whatever they defired; and fuffering themselves to be seduced from their Religion, they offered Sacrifice to the Idols of the Country. They also regaled without distinction even upon those Meats which were prohibited by their Law, and abandoned themselves to all kind of Pleasure, following the Women to whatever they led them. Thus the whole Camp was infected with lewd diforderly doings, in which the young Nobility strove to excel the com-mon People. Particularly Zimri the Son of Salu, a principal Man of the Tribe of Simeon, with great pomp and oftentation led Cosbi a Midianitish Lady to his Tent, in the face of Moses and of all the Congregation, who were weeping before the door of the Tabernacle for the great wrath which lay upon them

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by reason of their impieties. Josephus adds that Zimri sacrificed to Idols before them, and insulted Moses as he past by him. This so enslamed the Zeal of Phineas the Son of Eleazar, the Son of Aaron the Priest, who was sitting among the Penitents before the Tabernacle, that he started up and took a Javelin, and followed this lewd couple into the Tent, and there slew them both at one stroke. This seasonable Execution gave a turn to the Spirit of the People, and brought them to their right Wits again; and it was so pleasing to God, that he applauded it, and put a stop to the destruction which he had begun in the Camp; for he had sent a Pestilence among them, which had already consumed twenty four thousand of the People.

AND thus Balaam's pernicious Counsel had like to have proved fatal to Israel; and of all his Sorceries

this was the prevalent Enchantment.

WHENCE we may observe how dangerous a thing it is, to forsake the worship of God for the love of any Lust or Temptation whatever: And how reasonable it is, that we should love God above all things. For if we are more addicted to sensual pleasures, riches, or honours, than we are to the love and service of God, such a Lust is to all intents and purposes our God, i. e. our Supreme good, it has the chief Ascendant and Dominion over our affections, as our words and works testifie, whenever tryal is made: For when we are held in the Chains of any beloved Lust, we can see the will of God, and hear the reproofs of Conscience, and the most serious Exhortations to amend our Lives, and reject them all for the love and delight we have in that Lust.

NOW this alienation of our Heart from God, is a species and degree of Idolatry. Not indeed so gross

and provoking as a formal Renunciation of our Maker; and giving up ourselves to adore and invocate the World of Spirits, to put our trust in them, and seek to them for help and assistance in our own or others Necessities. The idolizing of a Lust is not such a slagrant kind of Idolatry as this: But it may as easily lead us to this last and worst degree, as it did the enamour'd Israelites, if such a practice be made the condition of enjoying such a Lust. Thousands of people have sold their Religion and their God for such considerations: And it is what happens every day somewhere or other in our reformed World, that for the sake of a desirable Marriage, succession to an Estate, or other worldly Advantage, the ways of Religion are inverted, and truth is exchanged for error.

THIS is croffing and contradicting the great Law of primitive Christianity, which obliged men to forsake all and follow Christ; whereas the sashion now is, to forsake Christ for almost any thing else. This is making a meer cloak of Religion, and sitting it to the back of the wearer, to make him appear just what the World would have him to be. And what can be the issue of such abuses?

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WE may guess what the consequence is like to be, by the example of the Israelites here before us. So long as they were stedsast in the worship of God, and maintained the Rites and Reverence of their Religion, they were under the wings of his Protection and vail of his Mercy, and no Enchantment or Machination of Men or Devils could prevail against them. Not that they were the best of men in other respects; they committed Offences, not a few, nor of a trivial nature. But their daily Sacrifices and Prayers to God, made a daily atonement for their Sins.

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By this means their Relation to him was preserved. He was their King and God, and they his People.

BUT when once they deserted his Service, and transferred their Allegiance to the Gods of the Heathen, against whom he had desended them, they not only forseited all claim to his Protection, but justly incurred his Hatred, and selt the effects of it in a de-

vouring Pestilence.

AND though we do not see such sudden Destruction light upon those among us, who rob God of his Honour, and worship the Creature more than the Creator, yet the consequences of such infidelity will prove as dreadful in the end. We see the abuses and corruptions of Religion are naturally productive of Atheism and forgetfulness of God: And while we pretend Conscience for some things, we take no care to render him the Reverence, Worship, and Honour which is due to him; We do by our behaviour tell the World, that we think it a matter of no great importance how the Worship of God is performed. This familiarity begets contempt, and contempt ends in hardness of Heart and a reprobate Mind. Thus we infensibly fall into the condemnation and snare of the Devil. We give him and his Agents all the advantage against us, and power over us, which they can desire. We are turned from Light to Darkness, and from the sweet communion and guidance of the Spirit of God, unto the dominion of fin and Satan; by which means he hath as fast hold of us, as if we were downright Idolaters. For it is equally pleasing to him, if we do his works, whether it be with or without Religious Forms: And Israel did not serve him more effectually at the Altars of the Midianites, than he is ferved here at this day by such dissolute Christians,

as either equally approve all modes of Religion, or

equally despise and neglect them.

and the fence which he set about it, was that System of Laws which he gave by Moses for the Government of his People. This fence separated them from the Kingdom of Darkness, and secured them from the Power of those reprobate Spirits which were the Gods of the Heathen; so that neither their Spiritual nor carnal Arms, neither their Soldiers nor Sorcerers, could prevail against Israel. But when by their Idolatrous practices Israel broke down this Fence, they became as weak and desenceless, and as obnoxious to the rage of evil Spirits, as other men.

THE case is in a great measure the same with us Christians; our Lord undertakes to secure us from the Rage and Malice of malignant Spirits, and to this end he has gathered us out of the World, and united us in the mystical body of his Church, by the Laws of his Gospel. Those who have contained themselves within this Fence, have constantly enjoyed the benefit of that safe-guard which was promised them. But those who break through it, run out of the bounds of their Protection, and must not wonder if they are furprized by that roaring Lion, who waits for such an advantage over them. And therefore let us account them as dangerous Enemies to us, as Balaam was to Israel, who lay a plot for our virtue, or go about to seduce us from the worthip of God. For this is the only way they can take to strip us of our impenetrable armour, and bring us down from triumphing over Satan, to lay our Necks under his Feet, and suffer all that his Tyranny can inflict. Those who tempt us to the commission of any Sin, bid us in effect ven-

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ture out of the compass of God's Grace and Protection, and so lose a privilege, which none but the Enemies both of our Souls and Bodies can ever wish

to fee us deprived of.

WHILE we keep within this compass, we are out of the reach of evil Spirits, and all their fiery Darts. Balaam could not curse whom God had not cursed, nor defy whom he had not defied. He favs very properly that he could not, for he wanted only the Power, not the Will to do it. God was pleased to expose this celebrated Magician before his Admirers; and convince them that he was fo far from having any Power or Authority to command Spirits. that he could not so much as govern his own Tongue. when his Maker was pleased to over-rule it. But suppose he had cursed Israel, what harm could it have done them, if God had bleffed them? For what is a Curse, but the Imprecation of some mischief to be inflicted by an invisible power? which if God will neither execute with his own hand, nor fuffer it to be executed by any other, the curse vanishes in the Air, and comes to nothing.

BALAAM did indeed bring a curse upon the People of God, but not before they became worshippers of Idols. He caused a Temptation to be thrown in their way, at which they stumbled and fell, and made them Sinners before they were Sufferers. But this was no proof of his Power over good men, but Apostates: And it assures us, that if we do not Apostatize from God and goodness, all the power of Magick cannot be able to affect us, so as to do us any

harm.

LET us then but ensure to our selves the Love and Favour of God, and we shall be arm'd with Omnipotency,

nipotency, and need not fear what Men or Devils can do against us. And the way to be sure of his favour is, to worship him in the Faith and Gospel of his Son Jesus, that Star which this Diviner saw rising out of Jacob, which was manifested to put to slight the Spiritual powers of Darkness, and to rescue our Souls and Bodies from their Tyranny into the glorious Liberty and celestial Family of the Sons of God, where he will put all Enemies under our Feet, and remove them to such a distance from us, that they shall never more be able to approach us. To him with &c.





SERMON XXXVIII.

On the Second Sunday after EASTER.

LOS ARIVE E OV EN N I IN G. SO STORES

NUMB. xxv. 10, 11, 12, 13.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phineas the Son of Eleazar, the Son of Aaron the Priest, bath turned my wrath away from the children of Ifrael (while he was zealous for my fake among them) that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealoufie. Wherefore say, Behold I give unto him my Covenant of peace: And be shall have it, and his feed after him, even the Covenant of an everlasting Priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Ifrael.



N which words we have four things offered to our confideration. First, The person here spoken of. Secondly, His eminent zeal for the Lord. The Thirdly, speedy and good effect of his zeal. Fourthly, The

ample reward of it.

I. THE person here spoken of was Phineas, the grandson of Aaron by Eleazar his third Son. For Aaron

Aaron had four Sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. Of which, the two first were cut off by the hand of God, for an abuse which they committed in offering incense with unhallowed fire, contrary to the divine Law. And leaving no Sons behind them, the priesthood came in order of succession to their younger. Brothers, Eleazar and Ithamar: of which, Eleazar being the elder, was chief, or High-prieft: And this Phineas was his Son, and afterwards his fuccessor: a wife, pious, and zealous man; imployed afterwards by the state of Israel, in the greatest Affairs both of War and Embassy. At this time it seems he was prince of the Levites, as Eleazar had been, while Aaron was living: I Chron. ix. 20. he is expresly styled Ruler of the Korabites, a confiderable branch of his own Tribe, and consequently he was now a man of authority and a Magistrate in Israel.

II. HIS eminent zeal for God was shown upon the occasion mentioned in the beginning of this Chapter, where we read, that while the Israelites encamped in the plains of Moab, they fell in love with strange women, and were by them seduced to the worship of strange Gods. This provoked the Lord their God to visit them with the rod of correction: but because he had lately defeated the conspiracy of Balak and Balaam against them, he would not give them up for a prey to their Enemies, lest they should ascribe their victory to the power of their Idols, and the weakness of the God of Israel; but he took the matter into his own hands, and fent a pestilence among them, which quickly swept away twenty three thousand. And besides, he commanded Moses to take all the heads of the people, i. e. the Rulers of thoufands and hundreds, and other principal persons in

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their Tribes, who had been guilty of the lewdness and idolatry before mentioned, and to hang them up before the Sanctuary, both to make an atonement to the divine Justice, and to reclaim the people from the like provocations.

nied, as it was natural, with a general fasting and mourning, and supplications to God, to turn away from the sierceness of his anger. For which purpose Moses and all such as seared God, and laid their present condition to heart, were gathered together about the door of the Tabernacle. Where while they were humbling themselves with a suitable grief and sorrow, Zimri, one of the chief men of the tribe of Simeon, brought Cozbi, a daughter of one of the sive Kings of Midian, of whom we read Chap. xxxi. & and led her into his Tent in the sight of Moses and of the whole congregation. Of this Zimri, Josephus writes, 'that when Moses had given out orders for the punishing of such Israelites as accompanied with

- ftrange women, he openly exclaimed at such pro-
- ceedings as arbitrary and cruel, faying, there was no
- reason they should be thus debarred of a just liberty;
- and that Moses, under a pretence of governing them
- by the direction of God, oppressed them with worse
- than Egyptian flavery. That for himself, having
- ' taken a Midianitish woman to wife, he thought not
- fit to conceal it, as being no more than what was

' right and reasonable to be done.'

THIS was a bold infult upon all those who were concerned to maintain religion and piety in the Church of Israel: and it particularly stirred up the spirit of Phineas who sate among the mourners: who being the High-priest's Son, and in the prime of his

years, was fooner filled with zeal and courage than older men. Accordingly he rose up out of the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand, and following Zimri into his Tent, struck him and Coshi through their bodies at one stroke, so that they died imme-

diately upon the spot.

NOW this he might lawfully do, according to the course of Justice then in practice amongst the Israelites. For they were under the direction of God by Moses, whose command to the subordinate magistrates and officers was, to put to death all the chiefs and ringleaders of the offenders. Such a magistrate or officer was Phineas, and therefore he might warrantably do this execution upon Zimri; and that with his own hands, as the custom was in such extraordinary cases, which differed nothing from military execution, where there is no room for fuch process as is used in civil Courts. The crime being plain, sudden, and of dangerous consequence, it was necessary that vengeance should speedily overtake it; otherwise the whole people might have been corrupted by bad examples.

NOR was this execution any breach of the Laws of that facred order to which Phineas belonged, but rather a greater duty in him upon that account; it being meet and right, that where extraordinary zeal was necessary, it should begin at the house of God. Thus in the case of the golden Calf, Exod. xxxii. when Moses stood in the gate of the Camp, and cryed, Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come to me: all the Levites presently gathered about him. And he commanded them in the name of God, saying, Gird on your swords, and go in and out from gate to gate through the Camp, and slay every man his brother, companion, and neighbour.

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neighbour. And they did so: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

PHINE AS, thus qualified to do justice on Zimri and Cosbi, was animated with a holy indignation to execute it speedily, and with his own hand. He did not wait to fee who of the congregation would rife before him, and take an invidious work out of his hands. He was not afraid left his Seniors should condemn him for a rash young man, who had a zeal without knowledge. He did not defer the execution of judgment to a farther opportunity. Our old English version of Psalm cvi. 30. where this fact is mentioned, fays, Phineas flood up and prayed; which is warranted by the Chaldee paraphrase. And no doubt he began with a prayer, but he did not end there. He did not fay to himself, 'We are now engaged in a religious work, humbling our felves before God, and it is onot seasonable to disturb the congregation; another time will be more proper to inflict deserved punishment on these offenders.' Neither was he afraid of the enmity he should incur, and the danger he ran by facrificing two fuch illustrious and powerful malefactors, whose many relations and other friends would be apt to feek revenge. Had he been under the influence of fuch wary fentiments as these, he had never been recorded, as he stands here in my Text, for a zealous man. For all these reasonings are too cool to confift with that quickness of resolution and fervour of Spirit, which deserves the name of Zeal in such exigences.

ON the contrary, this man was of a warmer conflitution, or, to speak more properly, had an uncommon measure of the Spirit of God in him. Which made him challenge to himself the post of honour, as

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as I I may call it, in the cause of God, and strike the first stroke in the vindication of his worship against idolatry. He saw the divine wrath revealed from heaven against this Sin, which to-day had consumed twenty three thousand of the people, and probably would have confumed as many more, had judgment been delayed till to-morrow. His eyes were so fixed on the glory of God, and the preservation of his people, that he had no care or concern for his own fafety. His thoughts were so strongly impressed with zeal for the common good, that he was not at leifure to think of his own private danger. Zeal being compounded of love and anger, two of the strongest passions of the mind, flies forward impetuously, without hearkning to the suggestions of fear and cautious deliberation. These passions were the wings of our religious champion's Soul, an ardent love of the God of Israel, and an indignation at those who were violating his honour. And thus we have seen Phineas his zeal for the cause of God. Let us now observe in the

IIId place, THE speedy and good effect of it. Phineas, says God, hath turned away my wrath from the children of Israel, that I consumed them not in my jealousie. It is noted of the sin of Idolatry, that it provokes God to jealousie above all other sins whatever: in that Law which he enacted against this sin, he styles himself a jealous God, and threatens to remember it and punish it in the late posterity of the offenders. The reason is, because the Covenant between God and his people has the resemblance of a marriage-contract, to which it is often compared in Holy Writ; and consequently apostasie from God to Idolatry is spiritual whoredom.

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NOW the Israelites in the history before us, being doubly guilty of this fin, both with strange women and with their idols, this caused the divine Jealousie to burn like fire against them, and it broke out upon them in a consuming pestilence, which destroyed in one day twenty three thousand, as St. Paul writes, I Cor. x. For whereas it is faid, just before my Text, that there died in the plague twenty four thousand, it is suppofed that a thousand of them fell by the hands of those officers, whom Moses commanded to arise and slay such of their men as had joined themselves to Baalpeor. This order was begun to be executed by Phineas; whose example encouraged the rest of the officers to proceed in the execution, as Josephus affirms. fo, by a speedy and undaunted slaughter of the apostates, they put an end to the apostasie of Israel, and by confequence to the plague which was fent to correct it. For God applies not supernatural remedies, where natural and ordinary means will do. But one or other of these courses must be taken, in publick and flagrant enormities. God or man must strike the offenders, and make them a terrible example to evil doers; or else they will infect the whole people, and make them so wicked, that they will be fit for nothing but to be rooted out from the face of the Earth. What our bleffed Lord says of the members of the natural body, he would have practifed in political and spiritual cases. If any one member become so corrupt, as that it threatens to infect all the rest, cut it off, and cast it away: for it is much better to part with it in time, than to be utterly destroyed by it. And fo it is in the body of the common-wealth; that the whole may be preserved, let that which is infectious be lopt off.

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TO do this, is not cruelty but mercy. None will blame God or man for doing it, but fuch as either do not understand it, or else are advocates and patrons of iniquity. God affirms of himself, that he is merciful and gracious, flow to anger and of great pity: that he spares us often when we deserve punishment, and is very unwilling to afflict us. And yet he sent grievous plagues at several times upon his own people; but it was for the reason before mentioned, viz. to recover them from fuch finful courses, as would have proved far more destructive to them than any of his visitations; it was fending upon them a less evil, in order to remove a much greater; and it was generally in cases where the hand of man either would not or could not vindicate the honour of God. His judgments are intended to awaken men, and ftir them up to plead for him and his righteousness. When this is effected, he commands the destroying Angel to sheath the avenging sword, as in the present case. Phineas, fays he, bath appeased my wrath, by zealousty executing judgment. And so Phineas, by this execution, was the instrument of a two-fold bleffing to the people. He put an end to their sin and to their punishment. He deterred them from their whoredoms and idolatries, and he caused the devouring pestilence to cease and be withdrawn from them. So speedy was the effect, so happy the issue of his zeal for God.

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I come now in the Fourth place to consider God's gracious acceptance and reward of this service, which he expresses in these words of my Text, Behold, I give him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the Covenant of an everlasting priestbood.

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IN which words the first thing to be considered is, the Covenant of peace, which comprehends all manner of bleffings, and is a solemn engagement to make him and his posterity prosperous. As to his own personal felicity, he certainly enjoyed the bleffing of a very long life: for he out-lived Joshua, to the time of the Judges; as it is noted near the end of their history: for we read, Judg. xx. 28. that Phineas the Son of Eleazar the Son of Aaron then stood before the Lord. And the promise of peace may farther import. that he and his children should continue in the priest's office, to make an atonement and reconciliation between God and his people. This is confirmed by the next words: he shall have, fays God, the Covenant of an everlasting priesthood, to him and his seed after bim, i. e. as long as the Jews continued to be a church and people. Yet this succession of the family of Phineas in the high-priesthood, was not without some interruption by Eli and his children, who were descended from Ithamar the youngest Son of Aaron, and presided till the days of Solomon, when the line of Phineas was restored. From him Azariah was the twelfth, who executed the Priest's office in Solomon's Temple. From Azariah there were nine more to the captivity of Babylon, as we read, I Chron. vi. And from the end of that captivity to the time of Antiochus Eupator, the Jews reckon fifteen more, the last of which, Onias, was flain by Lyfias. After him there were eight of the family of the Asmonæi; Aristobulus the eighth was killed by Herod, who, after that, made whom he pleased high-priest.

HOW Eli the younger family came to break in upon the line of Phineas, is uncertain. Some think that after these had held the office for four Generations successively,

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successively, their children were too young, or other-wise incapable, and Eli the fittest of the priests to administer the affairs of the Jewish nation; to which he was appointed by God, I Sam. ii. 30. Others well observe, that it being the constant course of God's proceedings, to continue his mercies to the Israelites upon the condition of their obedience, but to take them away when they became disobedient, it is highly reasonable to conclude, that there was some great offence given to God by some of the race of Phineas, which caused the interruption of the high-priesthood in his family.

AND whereas it may be objected, that there was no special grace and favour in God's granting the high-priesthood to *Phineas* and his posterity, as the reward of his zeal, since he was intitled to it already by right of Inheritance: It is answered, that there was; inasmuch as he might have died before his Father *Eleazar*, and so never have come to the enjoyment of it; or he might have had no Sons, and so not have enjoyed it in his children: which advantages are now by the divine promise secured to him.

AND to be invested with the priesthood as the special gift of God, was more honourable than to succeed to it by course of inheritance; since there are many unworthy heirs of high offices and estates: but those who are immediately advanced to them by God and their Prince, are justly presumed to be most worthy of them. And even where there is an antecedent promise of a blessing, yet to have it so graciously repeated and confirmed, makes a great addition to the value of it. Thus Abraham had been promised that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed, long before God commanded him to sacrifice his Son:

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but this promise was renewed to him upon that occasion, as the reward of his ready obedience.

A N D thus much of God's approbation and reward of *Phineas*, and his zeal in flaying *Zimri* and *Coshi*.

FRO,M what has been faid, several conclusions may be drawn with respect to publick happiness or misery.

As If, WE learn from hence; That no evil can befall a people comparable to the overflowings of Impiety and Debauchery. No enchantment is fo dangerous as that of fenfual luft; no forcerer fo pernicious as he who perfuades men to neglect the worship of God, to cast off his fear, to walk in the ways of their own hearts, and facrifice to the idols of their own corrupt affections. For by such apostasie from God, we not only lose in him a most gracious Father, an omnipotent Protector, an inexhaustible fountain of life and health, and all necessaries and comforts; but we make him our enemy; we incense his wrath. and arm his vengeance against our selves, we draw down his judgments upon our heads. These were the enchantments; contempt of God, and sensual lusts, were the infernal charms which prevailed against 7acob, and brought a curse upon Israel. Before they were overcome with these, no powers of earth or hell could hurt them. But no sooner do we hear of their fornication and idolatry, but we find them falling by the fword of the destroying Angel, and of their own magistates and officers. Their fins broke through their security, and opened a door to their miseries.

SO that whatever it is which makes us finners, makes us miserable. And this may help us to correct some fome mistakes which we are apt to entertain about our greatest calamities and worst enemies. We commonly think that war and famine, bad seasons and losses, sickness, pain and poverty, are the greatest evils of mortal life. Whereas rebellion against God is worse than all these, because it is the loathsome parent of these Furies, which could never appear in the World, did not Sin produce them, nor be able to hurt us, did not our sins give them their sting and their venom.

SO likewise we esteem those as our worst Enemies, who take arms against us and spoil us; while we overlook those amongst us who blaspheme God, and are hinderers and slanderers of his word; we are in friendship and consederacy with Atheists, Libertines, unclean, dissolute, riotous Livers, who are continually insecting us with their sins, and involving us in their

punishments. For,

upon the places where they live, as being enemies to all goodness. And as by their execrations and blasphemies they turn their habitations into a resemblance of hell; so God withdraws the light of his presence and favour from them, and gives them up by degrees to darkness and horror. He recalls that Angel of his host, who encamps round about those that fear him, and delivers them; he recalls him from the Tents of these ungodly men, and suffers the reprobate spirits, whose works they imitate, to enter with all their train of mischiefs, and reign among them.

AND can we wonder at this? can it be at all strange to us, that people who are always wishing for mischief, and invocating the author of it, and giving up themselves and their best friends to perdition, should have any thing but evil for their portion? As Vol. II.

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Christ said of the Pharisees, that all they aim'd at in their religion was the praise of men, and they had their reward; so when we see mischief befall a prophane, cursing Generation, we may say, they have the proper answer of their prayers. For the Psalmist's observation will always be true: He that delighteth in cursing, it shall come upon him: He that loveth not blessing, it shall be far from him.

But 3dly, TO what purpose do I mention these fins, and of what use can they be to any pious man? Why my Text points out the use we should make of them; not only to abstain from them, not only to mourn for them, but to express a hearty zeal and indignation against them: to declare to the patrons and actors of them, that we account them to be enemies of God and man; to separate as much as we can from their company, and to endeavour to bring them to condign punishment. This zeal should begin at the chief Magistrate, who should not bear the sword in vain, but make himself a terror to evil-doers. And from him it should be propagated to all subordinate officers, who should be quick and courageous in vindicating the cause of religion and virtue. And after them, men of all ranks and conditions, who invocate God by the name of Father in their prayers, should approve themselves his dutiful and affectionate children, by boldly rebuking the outrages and vices of impious men, whom if they find incorrigible, they should plainly detest, and renounce any farther communion with them.

THIS is no more than what is requisite to maintain that relation which we bear to God, either as his servants or his children. We cannot make good any one article of that love, fear, reverence, and gratitude which

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which we owe him for his daily benefits, if we can hear him blasphemed and dishonoured without shewing any refentment of such offences. If we are easie under such affronts of the divine Majesty, we joyn in rebellion against him, and make our selves partners in other mens fins. We add to the weight of those judgments which God will certainly pour down upon a faithless and provoking people, and for our lukewarmness and unworthiness, we shall justly bear a

share of such judgments.

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BUT if we vindicate the honour of our Lord and heavenly Father, with that becoming zeal which is here recommended in my Text, and in many other places of the divine Word; in so doing we shall testific our belief of his power and providence over us, and our thankful acknowledgment of the benefits we receive from him; and we may avert his judgments from falling on our own and others heads in this World; at least we shall secure our everlasting peace with God, and attain to the Inheritance of his adopted children, through him who was the greatest example of zeal for the divine honour and glory, Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father, &c.





SERMON XXXIX

On the Third Sunday after EASTER.

MORNING.

DEUT. iv. 1.

Now therefore hearken O Israel unto the Statutes and unto the Judgments which I teach you, for to do them; that ye may live, and go in, and possess the Land which the Lord God of your Fathers giveth you.



HE Book of Deuteronomy, like the other Books of Moses, takes its denomination in the Hebrew from the first words at the beginning of it. The name Deuteronomion was given it by the Greek Interpreters, and

fignifies The Repetition of the Law; because it is a fummary collection and recapitulation of the Laws contained in the former Books, together with the Addition of some few New ones. And there were several reasons which moved Moses to repeat them, and inculcate them more earnestly at this time upon the People.

MOSES was now, not only in the last year, but in the last two Months of his Life and Travels. He had brought his People to the plains of Jordan, they were just upon the point of passing this River, to take

possession of their long-desired Canaan.

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THIS situation of the Israelites Camp at this time, is often taken notice of in this Book, particularly chap. ix. ver. 1. where he fays, Hear O Ifrael, thou art this day to pass over fordan. We are obliged therefore to correct a fault of our English version, in the first verse of this Book, where it is said, That Moses spake these words in the plain over-against the Red Sea, which was that fide of the Wilderness directly opposite to the Situation they were now in. In the Hebrew Text the word is Zuph, which is here erroneously rendered the Red-Sea, by reason of the affinity of those names in the Original. But Zuph in this place fignifies a Town in the plains of Moab, where the people were now encamped: And so it should be corrected Num. xxi. 14. It is faid, says our version, in the Book of the wars of the Lord, what he did in the Red-Sea, and in the Brooks of Arnon. It should be read, what he did in Zuph, this City of Moab where they then were, and at the Brook of Arnon.

THIS is one reason why Moses made that solemn recital of the Law contained in this Book, because he was just at the end of his Life, and the People at the end of their Travels. Accordingly Maimonides introduces him making this Declaration to the People: 'The time of my decease is near at hand. If any one therefore has forgot any thing that I have delivered, let him come and refresh his memory; or if any thing seems hard to be understood, let him come, and I will explain it.'

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ANOTHER reason why he repeated and inculcated the Law, was this. The Elders who had heard the first promulgation of it, were all dead. except Caleb and Joshua. For this burden God laid upon them for their frequent Rebellions, and especially for their Blasphemies, and wishes that they had died in the Wilderness thirty eight years ago, at the first time that he was bringing them into the Land of Canaan. He confirmed their rash Vows, and told them, Num. xiv. 28. As I live I will do to you, if just as ye have spoken. Your Carcases shall fall in this Wilderness; none of you that murmur'd against " me, from twenty years old and upwards, shall ever come into the Land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein. But your little ones which vou faid should be a Prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the Land which ye have de-6 spised. However, they shall wander in the Wildere ness forty years, and bear your Whoredoms, until vour Carcases be wasted in the Wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye fearched the Land, even forty days, (each day for a year) shall e ye bear your iniquities, even forty years.' Now this Sentence was executed, the Elders were dead, and Moses himself, because he glorified not God as he ought to have done at the waters of Meribah, Num. xx. 12. was not permitted by God to go over Fordan, but only to gratify his Eyes with a fight of Canaan from the top of Pifgah. This being the case, it was the more necessary that the younger fort, who had lost the Heads of their Families, and were speedily to lose their great Prophet and Teacher too, should hear a solemn declaration of that Law from his mouth. before he was taken from them, which they were

throughout all Generations. For though this Law was committed to writing, as is very largely declared in this Book, and they bound to transcribe it, and read it carefully and constantly, yet the hearing it from the mouth of their great Legislator, would make indelible impressions upon them, and add such a weight and Sanction to it, as would always support its Sa-

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BESIDES, though they might well be supposed to have a general knowledge of their Law, (for many of them must be at this time between fifty and fixty years old) yet to make them acquainted with the particulars, it was necessary that it should be repeated to them. For it is not easy for a man to attain the folid knowledge of so copious a subject as this Law was, except he both read and hear the particulars often; by which means he may both sufficiently know them, and duly practife them. Moses therefore took this method for the instruction of the Israelites, probably spending every day of this latter part of his Life, in calling to their remembrance, again and again, the things which he had formerly taught them, and shewing how much an exact observance of them would be for their benefit and welfare.

NOW Moses begins his Exhortation to Obedience with a short Narrative of what had befallen the People, through the course of their Travels, from Mount Horeb to the place where they now resided. He puts them in mind how he had faithfully aim'd at their publick welfare in his Government of them, appointing such a number of Judges and subordinate Officers over them, men of their own chusing, who should preside over them in various districts and divi-

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fions, from Captains of thousands to Captains of Tens, reserving himself as the derniere resort, to whom appeal might be made in matters of great difficulty, that there might be no want of good counsel and direction, nor failure in the Administration of Justice between man and man: but that the meanest should have as fair a hearing as the greatest, and Strangers be as much under the protection and benefit of the

Laws, as the Israelites themselves.

IN the next place he celebrates the faithfulness and goodness of God towards them, who in two years time after their coming out of Egypt, (which was as foon as they could be well acquainted with the Laws of God, and be formed into a regular Church and State of people, under proper Officers and Ministers, and be disciplined and trained up to the practice of their Government, very necessary to strengthen them against the Nations they were to encounter in getting possession of Canaan) in two years. time, I say, God brought them to the borders of the promised Land, and bid them rise and enter boldly, without frighting themselves at the strength or number of the old Inhabitants the Amorites. And hereby he performed the Oath which he sware to their forefathers, and renewed to them. But they could not enter in because of their unbelief, and distrust of the power of God to give them the Victory: i. e. they would not rife and invade as he commanded them; and so made it impossible to settle themselves at that time. This was a very provoking piece of Infidelity, in a people who had constantly found by manifold experience, that God was able to do every thing for them that he promised them. And since, after such glaring demonstrations of the presence of God

God among them, they still remained incredulous, it was not only just, but even necessary for him to wear them out by many years wanderings in the Wilderness, as men who were uncapable of executing any thing, which was requisite to put them in the pos-

session of what he had promised them.

THEN Moses proceeds to tell how far the Divine fignal, i. e. the Pillar of fire and cloud carried the Israelites back again, which was Southward to Mount Seir, the Country of Edom, on the Coast of the Red-Sea, about Sixscore of our miles from the borders of Canaan. Hereabout they sojourned, till the time of their peregrination decreed of God was expired: Who then led them back again from these parts by Zalmonah, Punon, Oboth, and other places mentioned Num. xxxiii. till he brought them into the plains of Moab, to Mount Nebe, from the highest part of which, called Pisgab, he promised Moses a full view of all the Land of Canaan; which proves that this Mountain was both very high and very near it. This is the substance of the four first Chapters of this Book, and is the introduction to the recital of the Law; which Moses next begins.

THE Decalogue or Ten Commandments is the Subject of the fifth chapter; which having recited, he enforces the observance of them, and more especially of Duty to God, by various arguments drawn from his awful manifestations of himself at the delivery of the Law, and upon several other occasions; which Moses reminds them of with great earnestness, and charges them never to forget. These kind of instructions and admonitions are continued to the end of the eleventh chapter. Then he proceeds in the twelfth, and so forward to the twenty eighth, to enu-

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merate other Laws, ceremonial and civil, which he had delivered from God to the People. Some of these he explains; others he enforces with farther reasons, and in several places adds new ones for the greater fecurity of the whole; particularly he enjoyns them to engrave this Law upon Pillars of Stone, when they should come to be settled in the Land of Canaan. And then he pronounces those Bleffings which God would bestow on the Obedient, and the Curses he would inflict on Transgressors, more emphatically and movingly than he had done before, Leviticus xxvi. After which, he farther displays the wonderful Works which God had done for his People, and renews the Covenant between them, using many arguments to persuade them to a dutiful observance of it. Of all this he delivered a written Book to the Priests, Deut. xxxi. 9. commanding them to read it every seventh year, at the Feast of Tabernacles, in a folemn Assembly of the People from all parts, that none might pretend ignorance of their Duty. And lastly he concludes all with a very devout Psalm, which he ordered to be learned without Book by all forts of People; and dismisses the twelve Tribes with folemn Benedictions which he pronounced upon them.

JOSEPHUS, in his fourth Book of Jewish Antiquities, has comprized the farewell Oration which Moses made to Israel, in the following words. My dear Friends and Companions in long Travels, with

- whom I have passed through many dangers; fince
- ' it is the pleasure of the most High, and my
- age requires it, (who have now lived one hun-
- dred and twenty years) that I must be taken
- from you here in this place, and consequently can

do nothing for you beyond Jordan; I am resolved, according to the Ability and Grace which God hath given me, to employ my small remainder of life in doing you all the fervice I can, and opening the way which leads to your Felicity fo clearly, that you may retain some affectionate and grateful memory of me. Attend therefore I befeech you to my Counsel, that after I have shown you wherein your Felicity, and that of your posterity consists, and have left this perpetual monument of my entire Affection for you, I may with a willing mind depart out of this mortal Life. As to what I am about to fay, I doubt not but it will have its due weight with you, fince all my endeavours hitherto have been to procure your welfare, without mifleading you in any one instance, and because the fentiments of our Souls are never fo pure as then, when they are ready to be separated from the Body.

O ye Sons of Israel, there is but one way whereby Men can attain Happiness, viz by rendering God propitious and favourable to them; which he will be to none but those that please him, always resisting those who walk contrary to him. Towards him if you bear a dutiful regard (such as he requires, and I have recommended) you will always enjoy an encrease of prosperity, above all other People round about you: What good you have obtained, shall be fully confirmed; and what you want shall be superadded to you. Only take heed you be obedient to God's Ordinances, and never prefer any Institution before that which you have received, nor forsake the Religion which God has revealed, for

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any of Man's inventions whatever. This if you observe, you will be invincible in Battle, and put your Enemies to flight; for God will fight for you, and make you fearless of those who rise up against you. Great are the Rewards which are offered you in the ways of virtue, on condition you faithfully adhere to it; which is indeed a noble Reward to itself, and the means of procuring abundance of other Blessings: Keep up the practice of it, and your affairs will prosper, and your glory far outshine the Insidels, both at present, and for the time to come.

! Infidels, both at present, and for the time to come? And you will be virtuous, I dare promise you, if you maintain the Laws which by me God has revealed to you, and apply your hearts to underfland them. AS for me, my great consolation in death will be, to leave you in a prosperous condition, recome mended and well-disposed to be sober and temperate, to consult the publick Good, and to obey your · Commanders and Magistrates, who are to have the future care of you. And God, who hath hitherto had the guidance of you, and to whose favour you owe whatfoever you have received by me, will fill continue his gracious protection over you, fo long as he shall find you persevering in the ways of virtue. Nor shall you want such Counsellors as will make you happy with their advice, viz. · Eleazar the High-priest, and Joshua your Captain, with the Senate and Magistrates of the Tribes; c towards whom beware left ye grow stiff-necked, confidering that all they who know how to obey, will be able to govern well whenever they shall be called to it.

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LIKEWISE remember, that your truest Liberty confifts in chearfully obeying the commands of your Governors; contrary to your practice heretofore, of rewarding your Benefactors with infolence and reproach. This evil if you shall correct, 4 your affairs will have a more fortunate Issue. Never run into Sedition against them, as you have often done against me; and put me to greater hazards. e ye know it well, than ever I was in from foreign Enemies. Which I speak, not to upbraid you; for I would be loth to afflict you, now I am going out of the World, with the memory of those Miscarriages, which did not provoke me to take Revenge, even while they were acting: but I desire to apo prize you of that which is for your safety in time to come, that ye be not exalted with the abundance of your Riches, which you shall possess beyond Jordan, 6 so far as to defie your Governors, and run into Anarchy. Otherwise, if growing insolent by Prosperity, you become despisers of God's Ordinances, you will lose the Benefit of his Favour; and having made him your Enemy, you shall shamefully be driven out of your Possessions, by Armies which you shall not be able to withstand; and being disperfed all over the World, shall be made Slaves by Sea and Land. And when this calamity is fallen upon you, you will then with a late and ineffectual Repentance lament, that you had not better observed ' the divine Laws.'

THUS far the last Speech and Exhortation of Moses to Israel, as Josephus hath penned it. Which agrees indeed very well in substance, with what we find in the sacred Text. For the whole history of this People, from their coming out of Egypt to their pre-

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fent dispersion, informs us, that their prosperity and adversity always kept time with their obedience or disobedience of God's Laws.

AND the things which happened to them are intended to teach us, (and woe be to us if we do not learn) that there is a God that judgeth in the Earth, and that he will reward every Man according to his Works. For what do we take the Will of God to be? Are we not taught that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? And if he is of an unchangeable Nature, then we may imagine him to say all the same things to us, with respect to spiritual Holiness, and moral Good and Evil, as he said to his ancient people the Jews. But why should I say, Imagine, when he has made a new and express Revelation of his Will to us, by a greater Prophet than Moses, and added to his Law, the sanction of much greater Rewards and Punishments?

THE admonition of St. Paul is most just, That if God spared not the natural branches of his Church. but broke them off because they grew wild, and brought forth four Fruit; much less reason have we to expect that he should spare us, if we are as impious towards him, and as profligate in our Manners as his first People were. For we are not redeemed with the Blood of Bulls and Goats, but with the invaluable Sacrifice of his own dear Son. And if he that despised Moses's Law, died without Mercy, being convicted by the testimony of two or three Witnesses, of how much forer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and accounted the Blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and bath done despite to the Spirit of Grace! Heb. x. 28, 29.

WE may, with an easie variation, transfer the Words of my Text from Moses to Christ, and suppose the latter to call to us and say, 'Hearken, O Christians, to the divine Will which I have taught you in my Gospel, and do it; that ye may live, and go in, and possess that Kingdom of Heaven, which I have opened and prepared for all Believers.' And while he says this, he puts us in mind, that the old Egyptian Jews never set soot in their Canaga, because of their insidelity, which kept down their Spirits from attempting and striving to obtain it. How then shall it fare with many of us, who have not Faith enough to animate and stir up our Hearts to do the Will of our Lord, which is made the only condition of entring into his Kingdom?

IF they escaped not the scourge of God's Judgments, who resused to hear his Law from the Mouth of an earthly Man, much less shall we escape them, if we turn away from his Son, who came down from Heaven to declare his Will to us. The very Scribes and Pharisees could answer this question of our Saviour's, when he demanded of them what the Lord of the Vineyard would do to those Husbandmen, who having slain his Servants, last of all slew his Son. He will, say they, miserably destroy those Husbandmen, and let out his Vineyard to others, who will give him the fruits of it in due Season, Matt. xxi. 41.

NOW if Libertines shall object and say, that it is not in their power to hurt the Son of God, the Apostle will tell them there is a way to crucifie him afresh, and put him to open shame, Heb. vi. 6. And this way he is daily crucified and reviled by them, in their blasphemous Discourses and Writings. If they say, the fault is in his Gospel, which is not satisfactory to their Reason

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and Understanding, let them look back to ancient Days, and they shall find that it has given sull satisfaction to great numbers of Men in all Ages, who were at least equal to themselves, in what they call Reason and Understanding. If they deny that God ever revealed his Will from Heaven to Men, they are Atheists, and have no right to be heard; but if they allow that this has been done some time, the Gospel will bid as sair, in the Judgment of natural and common Sense, as any other Book, for containing the sum and substance of this Will of God.

IT is the divine Will, that Mankind should arrive at real and immortal Happiness; and the way to this happiness is here set forth to be this, that we love God with all our Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind, and our Neighbours as our selves. Which two things if all the World could once agree to practise, our present temporal Felicities (to say nothing of the eternal) would be far greater than we are able to conceive

or express.

CERTAIN it is, that the great enemies of our Christian Faith are such as hinder this good fruit of it, by fighting against God the fountain of all Goodness, and encouraging all others to do the like, which is the greatest mischief they can possibly do them. Perhaps they will say, they love such Companions as well as they do themselves, and so at least suffil this part of their Duty. But the same, I believe, may be affirmed of the Devil, who wishes no worse to those whom he tempts to Sin, than to be as miserable as himself. Let them know then that the Love of God must precede that of our Neighbour, and be the foundation of it. He that loves not God in the first place, will never benefit Mankind by any acts of special Fa-

vour or Friendship. God may indeed over-rule such a Man's Actions, as he often does those of evil Spirits, to his own Glory, and the good of others. But then it will be contrary to the design of the Actor, who upon his own Principles is not capable of wishing or doing a real good to any one.

WE conclude then, that those are the greatest Benefactors to Mankind, who are most careful to hear the word of God and to do it. They are very instrumental, in their several stations, to avert his wrath, and cause him to look down with pleasure upon the places where they dwell. And the Benefits which they do to others are most truly such, because they do them for God's sake, and with an eye to win People to his love and Service; which is the greatest happiness they can procure to them.

LET us therefore, as we wish well to our selves and others, apply our hearts to know and love God, and keep his Commandments, by which means we shall derive a Blessing upon the place where we live, and after the time of our pilgrimage here is ended, we shall reap the fruits of our obedience, and find rest for our Souls, in those happy mansions which our Lord has prepared for such faithful servants. To him with the Esc.



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SERMON XL

On the Third Sunday after EASTER.

EVENING.

DEUT. v. 2.

The Lord our God made a Covenant with us in Horeb.



Have formerly observed, that this book of Deuteronomy is so named, because it contains a repetition of those things, which had been told and related in the foregoing

books. And this chapter is a plain proof of the truth of this affertion. For here we have those ten Commandments rehearfed, which were written before. Fixed xx. To this Rehearfal the words of my Text are a proper introduction; and they offer three things to our confideration. I. The place where this Law was delivered. II. Why it is called a Covenant. III. The parties between whom it was made.

And If, THE place where the Law was delivered, is here called Horeb; tho' in Exod. xix. it is called Sinai: and these two names are used promiscuoufly in several places of holy Scripture, for one and the same mountain. Our European Travellers who

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have feen them, fay, they are two Eminences arifing from one and the same ridge: That they are at this day inhabited by Christians, with some mixture of Jews and Turks. That at the foot of Sinai, there is a christian Monastery dedicated to St. Katharine, which has caused the hill to be called St. Katharine's mount. This Bellonius, one of the Travellers, calls a high and inaccessible hill. That there was no natural way to ascend it, but only by steps cut out by the hands of men. That tho' they began to ascend at break of day, yet it was afternoon before they came up to the This agrees with what Josephus writes of this mountain, that it is by far the highest of any in that Country; and by reason of its steep and ragged rocks, is not only unfrequented of men, but cannot be beheld without some horror. However our Travellers found fome habitations about it. For they tell us the Monks of St. Katharines shewed them two chapels at the top, and several on the sides of the mount, one of which is dedicated to Etias, being built in the place where he is supposed to have lain hid, when he fled from fezebel. They likewife shewed the place, where Moses received from God the two Tables of the Law. It is a little fair chapel, thut up with an iron door. But these works are owing to the devotions of later times: in the days of Moses it is certain that these mountains were uninhabited.

FROM the side of Horeb (says Bellonius) there falls a very fair spring of water into the valley adjoyning. And very probable it is, that there was such a water in Moses's time. First, Because he incamped thereabout almost a year, and drew no water, as in other places, by miracle. Secondly, Because it is written, Exod. xxxii. that when Moses had ground the Golden-calf to N 2 powder.

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powder, he cast it into the water, and made the children of Israel to drink of it.

ON this mountain (for we shall speak of Sinai and Horeb agreeably to the scripture style, as of one and the same place) the divine Law was given to Moses for the government of God's Church and People. It stands in the desert of Arabia, about the distance of

fixty miles from the Red-sea.

HERE they arrived in forty five days from their departure out of Egypt, and encamped before this mount for two reasons: one was, a former instruction which God had given to Moses, when he first imployed him in the deliverance of his People, Exod. iii. 12. that when they were delivered, they should worship him in this place. The other was, that the Schechinah, or glorious cloud, which led them in their travels, and by resting determined their stations,

now rested upon this mountain.

OUT of this Glory God called unto Moses, on the first day of their arrival here, commanding him to prepare the People for the hearing of his Law, by putting them in mind how he had fought for them against the Egyptians, and carried them in the Wilderness as an Eagle carries her young ones, and chosen them above all nations of the World, to be a peculiar People to himself. Then he directs them how to purifie themselves against the approaching solemnity; to wash their cloaths, and abstain from all sensual enjoyments for three days together. And he charges them, upon peril of their lives, to keep at a due distance from the mount, during the promulgation of the Law, and not to lay a hand upon it, or offer to climb up, out of curiofity to fee more of the divine Appearance at the top of it.

WHEN

WHEN the People were thus prepared and instructed how to behave themselves, the Lord descended upon the Mount, with myriads of his holy Angels, in a thick cloud, out of which came thunders and lightenings, and the found of a trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the People in the Camp trembled. And Moses brought them forth out of their Camp, and placed them at the foot of the mountain, to attend upon God. And mount Sinai burnt to the midst of Heaven; because the Lord came down upon it in fire, and the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked exceedingly. And when the found of the trumpet had lasted long, and still increased as it went on, Moses spake unto God to excuse his nearer approach, saying, I exceedingly fear and tremble. But God encouraged him not to fear, bidding him come up to the top of the mount. So Moses went up, and entered into the midst of that fire and cloud, wherewith the mountain was enveloped.

THIS was only to confirm his faith, and give him an affurance of safety. For he did not now stay to receive the Law, but was presently sent down again, to repeat the charge which had been given before to the People, that they should not break thro' their bounds to gaze upon the divine Appearance. And let the priests, says he, which come near to the Lord to perform sacred offices, purishe themselves from all uncleanness, but let them not come up with thee: Only Aaron was admitted to come up higher, because he was shortly to be consecrated High-Priest, and he would be the more reverenced by the People, when they saw him admitted far nearer to God than

they were.

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AFTER the trumpet had summoned the People to attend, there came a voice from the Schechinah or divine Majesty, out of the midst of the fire, i. e. of the Angelick Host, which appeared like slames of fire. Which made St. Paul say, Gal. iii. 19. That the law was ordained by Angels, who were then in attendance on the divine Majesty, as his retinue, when he proclaimed these ten Commandments. And he proclaimed them with so strong a voice, that all the People, who were very numerous, plainly heard them.

AND thus much of the Place where, and the

Manner how the Law was delivered.

II. THE next thing to be enquired into is, why this Law is called a Covenant.

I answer: A Covenant is a compact or mutual agreement between parties, to be serviceable to one another upon certain conditions. And so it is here: The short account of God's Covenant with Israel, is this: I will be their God, to protest them: and they shall be my people, in obeying my laws. Now tho' God is the supreme Governor of all the World; yet the reason upon which he founds his right to be the Lord and Lawgiver of Israel is, because he had with many miracles redeemed them, and taken them into his protestion. I, says he, have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; therefore thou shalt worship me only, and keep my commandments.

HAVING purchased them with many Judgments wrought for their deliverance, and separated them from other nations to be a peculiar People to himself, it was proper that he should give them a body of laws, as all Kings and Founders of Commonwealths usually do in the infancy of their government. And like them, God condescends to stipulate and contract

contract with his People, shewing them the reasons and advantages of his Laws, and proposing it to their own choice, whether they will accept of them or not. If, fays he, ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people. Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a boly nation. i. e. 'Ye shall be most free and happy, bike Kings ye shall have no superior on earth, being ' safe under my protection, supported by your piety, onot by your arms: like Priefts, you shall spend your time in facrificing, and feafting upon your facrifices; not being driven, like the heathen, to confult lying oracles, and to help your felves, in difficult cases, by the wretched arts of divination; for I, the God of truth and wisdom, will be your 'counsellor and director in all your affairs.'

THESE proposals on God's part, Moses, as he was commanded, laid before the elders of Israel, and they communicated them to the People, who answered with one consent, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do: we take him for our king, and will obey his laws. Which answer Moses, as a mediator between God and the People, returned to the Lord. The like answer they gave after the promulgation of the Law, Exod. xxiv. when Moses having wrote it in a book, built an Altar, offered facrifices, and sprinkled half the blood on the Altar. Then he took the book of the Covenant, and read it in the audience of the People: and they faid, All that the Lord bath faid, we will do. and be obedient. After which, he took the other half of the blood, and sprinkled it on the People, and said. Behold the blood of the Covenant which the Lord bath made with you concerning all these words. Thus the divine Law passed into a Covenant between God and his N 4 People.

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People. It was plainly proposed and declared on God's part; it was voluntarily accepted and agreed to by the People; it was committed to writing, and solemn-

ly ratified and confirmed by facrifice.

BUT here some man may ask, Why did God transact with his People by way of Covenant, and propose the terms of his government to their consideration, and wait for their consent? Why did he not rather chuse to notifie his will and pleasure to them, and demand their obedience by virtue of that

right which he has over all his creatures?

I answer: God submitted his Laws to the approbation of his People, that he might justifie the reasonableness of them. For who among them could think it unreasonable to put himself under the protection of that God alone, who had triumphed fo gloriously over all the gods of Egypt, and wrought the greatest Miracles in Heaven, Earth, and Sea, for the deliverance of his People? Who would grudge to fanctifie their first-born, keep the passover, and observe other proper commemorations of this deliverance? Who would not esteem it a great favour and goodness of their God, to excuse them from making such costly images of him, as the nations of the World commonly made of their deities? What grateful mind would not be willing to confecrate one day in feven to his fervice, and honour him with the first fruits of the earth, and the facrifices of their flocks and herds, who fed them with Manna in the Wilderness, and led them to a land flowing with milk and honey? Finally, What lover of the virtues of private or publick life, would not be glad to live under such laws as restrained injuries and debaucheries, and were a terror to evil-doers, but a protection and encouragement to men of a fober, pious, and and beneficent conversation? Such were the Laws which God enacted for the government of his People, so plain and full of good sense, so well suited to the benefit of society, and of every individual person in it, that they might safely be referred to the judgment of the Elders, as worthy to be the laws of that Theocracy, that Government which God would exercise in Israel.

adly, GOD treated with his People in a way that might gain their consent to his Laws, because he would reign over them as a free People. He had lately delivered them from tyrannical masters, who loaded them with burdens which they were not able to bear: and therefore he resolved that they should now taste the sweets of liberty. In order to which, he will injoyn them no service but what their own judgment shall approve, and their own tongues pronounce to be fair, equitable, and conducive to their own happiness.

I desire to be understood of the moral Law, which is here recited presently after the words of my Text. I confess the ritual Law is sometimes called a yoke and a servitude. But it is so called by the Apostles, not absolutely, but in comparison of the Gospel, which was the end and substance of it. Before this end was accomplished, and this substance exhibited, the ritual Law was as necessary to lead men to it, as a School-master, to use St. Paul's similitude, is, to teach any science or part of learning; and could only then become useless, when the end was attained; and so, and no otherwise, is it represented as a yoke.

INDEED the nature of God is so thoroughly good, that he cannot exact any thing of his People as a duty, which is not conducive to their spiritual or temporal welfare. And nothing can render the service of his People acceptable to him, but the performing

of it with a free heart and willing mind. This is the reason why the duties of the first Table are all fummed up in the love of God. He that loveth not God, is not qualified to keep his Commandments: nor can he love God, without being fensible of the excellency of his Laws; which when he is convinced of, he will freely and readily obey them.

A N D thus much of the reasonableness of the divine Occonomy: it is founded in a Covenant or mutual agreement between God and his People; whereby God engages to bless them, and they promise to obey him, not grudgingly, and as it were by compulsion; but with all their heart, and Soul, and

strength, and mind.

THIS feems to make it needless to observe, what

I proposed in the

IIId place, WHO were the parties to this Covepant. Yet Moses has observed it in the next words after my Text. The Lord, says he, made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us; even us who are all of us here alive this day.

THIS is not so to be understood, as if God had made no Covenant with Abraham and the Patriarchs: for he stipulated very expresly with them, to be their God, to give them the land of Canaan, to multiply them exceedingly, and to bless all nations in their feed. And he inflituted Circumcifion for a fign and token of this Covenant. But he did not so appropriate them to himself, and form them into a peculiar People, by giving them a body of Laws for that purpose, as he now gave them at Horeb. For Isbmael the son of Abraham, and Esau the son of Isaac, went out from their fathers houses, and founded Kingdoms and People very different from Israel in their

their religion, laws and customs. But now the twelve Tribes are separated from all the World, to become the Kingdom or People of God, and to be governed by these Laws which were here given them at Horeb; and which were intended to bind not only the present Generation, but their Posterity after them. For this Command was often inculcated upon them, that they should educate their children in the knowledge and observance of these laws, and charge them to transmit the same to their children.

THIS Covenant therefore, or form of Government, comprehended all Israel, and them only as a nation, but it did not exclude people of other nations and families, who thought fit to enter into it. Accordingly we read of many who became Profelytes to the Tews religion, who if they dwelt in diffant countries, as it often happened, they went to Jerusalem at certain seasons to offer sacrifice, because there only Sacrifice might be offered. But we do not read that any entire Nation ever embraced the same Form of Government; nor can we well conceive to what purpose it would have been, except God had revealed himself to them, and covenanted with them as exprefly as he did with the People of Israel; which we may justly conclude he never intended, both from the apparent order of his decrees, and from those prerogatives, which he granted to this People above all nations of the earth.

UPON this occasion we cannot but take notice how God prefers some people above others, by revealing his Will, and dispensing his Grace and Favour to one Nation, while many others lay neglected, sunk in ignorance, corrupted with idolatries, and destitute of such light as might direct them to any kind of happiness either

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either in this or a future state. If we would know the reason of these different dispensations, and ask why God is more gracious to one than to another, we must consider what sort of obligations God has entred into, to be the Lord and Saviour of men. The obligations are called, as here, by the name of Covenants, which, as I noted before, import mutual, free, and voluntary agreements between parties, of something to be done upon certain conditions; which when they are broken by one side, the other party is released from his share of the bond or obligation.

NOW three such Covenants, we read in Scripture, have been transacted between God and men. The first was that in Paradise, between God and all mankind in the person of our first Parents: which when they had broken, all their race fell under the fentence of death, the penalty annexed to the transgreffion. The fecond Covenant was God's merciful grant to Abraham and his Posterity, whom he chose out of the bulk of fallen men, engaging to be their God, and to own them for his People, upon the condition of their obedience to his Laws. This was often violated on the part of the faithless Jews, and finally cancelled and abrogated, upon their crucifying the Messiah, and consequently denying the Father who fent him. The third Covenant was established in the Faith of the faid Messiah, and in pursuance of the divine Promise, that in him all nations and families should be bleffed; and it was granted upon this condition, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. This excludes from the Salvation of God, all those who are aliens or enemies to Jesus Christ, which renders the acceptance of it so much the more dear and valuable. And tho' it has been

been horribly abused in the World, so that whole nations have been justly deprived of the benefit of it, and abandoned to a reigning and destructive Infidelity; yet in some other places it still subsists, and so it shall, some where or other, to the end of the World.

OF these three Covenants, the first and last were universal, extending to all mankind; the second particular, to Israel only. And according to the intent and meaning of a Covenant, no man could ever reap any benefit by them, but he that performed the conditions which belonged to his part to perform. And of the many people and nations of the World, God hath taken some into covenant with himself, and others he hath left out. For what reason he has made this difference, whether out of his own meer Grace and Goodness, or through foresight that some would prove more deserving of the privileges of his Covenant than others, are points attended with difficulties which I have not leifure at present to discuss; only this is certain, that those who are taken into covenant with God, are called to a condition and state of Salvation, to which others who are not called, have no manner of right or title. For tho' of the many who are called and entred into covenant with God, but few prove fincere and worthy members, so as faithfully to perform the conditions of it, yet all are called out of their natural darkness into the light of God's Truth, and the way of Salvation; which if they do not attain, it is because they will not walk in the way to it: the means are put into their hands to become partakers of it; if they miscarry, it is because they have no heart nor goodwill to the work, which must entitle them to the reward.

BUT

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BUT now, those who were never taken into the new Covenant of God's Mercy and Reconciliation with mankind, are in no capacity to receive the benefits of it: they are still under that curse and sentence of damnation which past upon all our race in the persons of our first Parents. They are every where in Scripture represented as children of wrath, sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, alienated and cut off from the family of God's children, and shut out from that Kingdom, which he hath opened to none but those who keep his Covenant.

AND indeed it would be very unaccountable that God should take such pains, if I may so speak, and work so many miracles for the redemption of his People out of Egypt, and for their Salvation by Jesus Christ, and that he should so solemnly enter into covenant with them, to serve him by a new Law of his own dictating and revealing, if men were in a capacity to be saved out of this Covenant, and there were in nature an obligation upon God to be their Saviour, and to remit the penalty which they had incurred by their first transgression.

THIS is such a just and fair way of arguing, that the Deist, who builds his salvation upon the practice of what he calls natural religion, is forced to deny our first principles, I mean, the authority and truth of holy Scripture; which is indeed the only way that he has to maintain his cause. For if the Bible be true, then it is certain that God has made a new Covenant with mankind, and that Salvation can be obtained no otherwise but upon the terms of that Covenant.

AS to the Deists natural religion, I believe they do not know what they mean by it. If they mean, the belief and worship of the true God, it is plain, from

the great variety of false religions in the World, that the light of nature is not a sufficient guide to lead men into this truth. But if by natural religion they mean the practice of moral virtue, they speak very improperly, and even so lay a wrong foundation; for meer natural reason is not sufficient to find out and prescribe all the needful rules of strict moral virtue. If I should say, that the laws of justice, temperance, and all moral virtues, which have been written by the wifest Legislators and Philosophers of the Gentiles, were but traditions of such Doctrines as at first were revealed by God, I should say no more than what learned men have advanced before me, and supported their opinion by probable arguments. And it is an unanswerable objection against the sufficiency of meer human reason for all moral actions, that the wifest and politest Nations have differed from one another, as much in their notions and practice of Morality, as in matters of Religion.

BUT supposing we had naturally the knowledge of the whole moral Law, yet is the Word of God an inestimable blessing to the World, because it effectually prescribes it, adding to it the sanction of proper rewards and punishments, and bringing it home to be a rule to the very thoughts and intentions of our hearts. I am apt to think, that the Israelites knew the substance of the moral Law, before they came to mount Horeb. But their hearing it proclaimed from thence with such awful solemnity, by the voice of God, and receiving it in Tables written with his own hand, as part of his Covenant with them, rendred it for ever sacred and of divine Authority to them. And when, towards the end of their Church and State, their Rabbies had made this Law

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of small effect by their opposite traditions, how well did our Lord restore it, and how strongly did he inforce it upon our consciences, by assuring us, that not only our words and works, but even the secrets of our hearts shall be judged by this Law at the last day.

TO conclude then: Let us always be mindful of the new Covenant which God hath made with us; let us labour to understand it, and esteem it, and praise him for it: and let no suggestions of wicked men or devils hinder us from performing our part of this Covenant, that so we may be entitled to the privileges of it, even an Inheritance with those who are adopted into the Family of God, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father, &c.





SERMON XLI.

On the Fourth Sunday after EASTER.

MORNING.

DEUT. vi. 6, 7.

And these words which I command thee this days
shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them
diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them
when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou
walkest by the way, and when thou lyest down;
and when thou risest up.



was a great Prophet, and by the faculty which he had of foreseeing things to come, might possibly apprehend that the Jews, some time after his decease, would neglect

and trample under foot that Book of Laws which he had received with so much solemnity from the mouth of God, and had with so much care and pains committed to writing; yet indeed he might without a spirit of Prophecy, forebode in his own mind this treatment of his Writings, since by forty Years experience he had proved the insidelity of this People, and their readiness upon all occasions to depart from You. II.

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God. However, that he might do his utmost to prevent this, and leave the present and future Generations without excuse; he charges his People, with all the authority of a Prince, a Prophet, a Lawgiver, and Spiritual Father, that the heads of Families should not fail every Day, Morning and Evening, to read some part of his Writings to their Children, and to be talking of them while they were about their worldly Affairs, whether at home or abroad; to the end that they might constantly bear in their own Mind, and inculcate upon their Children, the Unity of the divine Nature, his glorious Attributes, and the wonderful Works which he had done for them; that by such Lessons and Discourses they might be moved to fear him, love him, and honour him with all their Heart and Soul, and to worship and serve him according to the precepts which he had given them.

THIS leads us to confider the natural bent and temper of our own Hearts, how prone we are to forget God, and that the only way to keep up a lively fense and impression of him upon our Minds, is to be very frequent in reading and meditating upon his holy

Word.

And 1st, THE heart of Man is naturally prone to forget God. In this degenerate and corrupt state of Nature, to which Sin and Satan have reduced us, we are born no better than Atheists; the imaginations of our Hearts are only evil continually. For a proof of this, we need not go into the wildest and most barbarous parts of the World, where the People live such a rude Life, that they seem to have neither divine nor human learning amongst them. But we see this in the People before us, the Israelites, who were eyewitnesses of the Glory of God, and heard him thunder from

from Mount Sinai, and saw his Omnipotence in the Plagues of Egypt, in the Red Sea, in other Miracles which he wrought for them in the Wilderness. All which, one would think, must make indelible impresfions upon their Minds; and yet after all this, we are fure that the greatest part of them died Atheists. For God complains of them, Pf. xcv. that after forty Years travel with them in the Wilderness, wherein he had given them the greatest demonstrations of his Power and Presence among them, their hearts continued hard and impious to the last, and they never attained to the right knowledge of him: which provoked him to cut them off, and cast them out of his

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AND that the greatest part of Christians have been and are as destitute of the true knowledge and fear of God, the Histories of the past and present Times and Countries of Christendom assure us. And our sins of this kind are so much more grievous than theirs, as we have been taught our Religion by a greater than Moses and the Prophets. For God, who sent his Servants to those under the Law, hath given us his Gospel by the ministry of his own Son. Yet, notwithstanding he hath declared to us the whole Will of his heavenly Father, and told us Job. xvii. 3. that this is life eternal, that we should know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; how many Heresies have fprung up among Christians about the Object of divine worship? Though Christ has confirmed the Law and the Prophets, which constantly forbid the use of Images in religious Worship, and commanded us to make our Requests to the Father in his name alone; yet with how many Images, with how many Mediators have most parts of Christendom filled their

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Churches?

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Churches? And whereas he has laid the strictest injunctions upon his Disciples to maintain unity, peace, and love among themselves, telling them that their mutual love should be the most distinguishing Mark and Character that they belonged to him; yet what variety of Schisms have defaced the Beauty, and mangled the good order of his Church? what fiends and furies of War have enraged his People to destroy one another? what envy, hatred, and malice defeat that Communion of Saints upon Earth, which is one of the fundamental Articles of our Religion? Finally (for I must make an end of the Recital, though there be no end of the Sins) how few Christians are there, who love God, and feek his Kingdom, and aim at his Honour and Glory above all other things? How few, that refuse to gratifie their carnal Lusts, that set their affections on things above, that seriously labour after that regeneration of Heart, and that holiness of life and conversation, which are necessary to fit them for the Kingdom of God?

THESE are all sad, but undeniable proofs of the truth of my first proposition, that the Heart of Man is extremely prone to Atheism, to grow unmindful of the God that made him. And not only Man in his meer natural Condition, Man that sits in the region and shadow of Death; but even those Men who are all taught of God, and often resort to his House, and hear his Word, are very apt to forget themselves, and walk contrary to it; those Men to whom the Sun of Righteousness is risen, and the day-spring from on high hath appeared, do commonly love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.

THIS puts us upon enquiring what remedy may be found most likely to cure our forgetfulness of God;

what power there is which can give a turn to atheistical Propensions; and this is the business of my

fecond Proposition, which was this:

2dly, THAT the only way to keep up a lively sense and impression of God upon our minds, is, to be very frequent, and almost continually exercised either in reading, hearing, or meditating upon some part of the Divine word. These words, says Moses, shall be in thine Heart: Thou shalt talk of them upon all occasions; they shall be as the signet upon thine Hand, and frontlets between thine Eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the

posts of thine bouse, and on thy gates.

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THIS wife and holy Law-giver knew how much mens hearts are alienated from all goodness, and that it was requifite to befiege them, as it were, and batter them with incessant applications of the Word of God, before due impressions of Religion could be made upon them. For it is no easie matter to beat out the Vanities of the World and the Lusts of the Flesh, from afferting the possession which they have taken of us. A few cold Prayers, and uneasie Meditations, and formal hearings of the Word of God, will never dispossess them. But a daily affiduity and constancy in these duties will gradually weaken them and drive them out. For Constancy will beget Zeal, and Zeal will make us delight in drawing nigh to God; and then he will draw nigh to us, and daily appear more good and gracious, more excellent and lovely to us. By often raising our Hearts to Heaven, and setting our Affections upon it, and laying up our treasure in it, we shall become more acquainted with it, and our Ideas and Conceptions of the most amiable Society. the most ravishing entertainments, the undisturbed Peace and Tranquillity, and the most noble and agreeable

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agreeable Exercises of that place, will be mightily enlarged.

BY frequently making our Prayers to God, to give us his Holy Spirit, we shall find the effect of his promile in that behalf, and sensibly taste of his Holy comforts. We shall hear him speak peace to our Souls, and bear witness with our Spirits that we are the Children of God. We shall feel him purifie our Hearts by Faith, and purge out the old leaven of carnal Affections, so as to cause in us a hungring and thirsting after Righteousnels, and make us know and confess that we live not by material bread alone, but receive the foundest and truest nourishment by doing the will of our Heavenly Father. He will open our Eyes, that we shall see wonderful things in his Law. and discover those charms in Holiness and Virtue, which the unregenerate are wholly ignorant of, because they are spiritually discerned. And this spiritual discernment is only to be attained by acquainting ourselves with God, and taking all opportunities to come into his presence, and hold Communion with him.

Religious duties, are not able to conceive the benefits we might reap from them, and to what wonderful strength the grace of God, by diligent improvement, might grow in us. Do we think the Scripture would so earnestly inculcate, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear, if there were not Advantages in hearing God's word, answerable to the vehemence of this Exhortation? Can we suppose it would compare our Heavenly portion to a treasure more precious than all this World about us, if there were not sufficient ground for such comparison? Why are we bid to search for this Treasure, and strive for this Inheri-

tance, if our Prayers and Obedience to God were not a fure means to obtain it? Are we bid to rejoyce in the Lord always, and is there no possibility of accomplishing this joy? Are we commanded to fear nothing but God, and do not we believe that by fearing him as we ought to do, we shall surmount all the terrors of Men and Devils? There is no doubt but the Bleffings and Comforts of our Christian Religion do infinitely transcend all that we commonly experience of them. We cannot doubt this, if we believe any thing of the Hely Apostles, who underwent all the Afflictions of this life, and yet defied them, and gloried that they were more than Conquerors over them all: or if we give any credit to the Histories of Martyrs and Confessors, who in all their Agonies with Men and Devils, have exprest abundance of inward joy and fatisfaction; whereas we have commonly our hopes in this Life, and are fadly clouded and overwhelmed even with the lighter Afflictions of it. What is it that makes fo great a difference between them and us?

THE reason of the difference, I am persuaded, is this; that we are lukewarm, and they were zealous; we negligent, and they punctual; we thoughtless, and they attentive in all the Duties of Religion. Can we imagine that our cold Devotions, and those unfrequent and slow approaches which we make to the Divine Majesty, and that diffident apprehension which we consequently have of his Fatherly goodness towards us, could ever have animated us to have endured their Sufferings, with their Courage and Alacrity? No; they walked with God, they had him in all their thoughts, they watched for, and eagerly laid hold of all opportunites to glorisie him in publick worship.

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THEY were indeed the very reverse of the pre. fent Generation of Christians; for whereas we commonly run with an hungry Appetite to all the Assemblies of fenfual Entertainments, and purchase them at a high price, while we go heavily to the house of God, and are very sparing in our expences upon his worship: On the contrary, these his faithful Servants had a much stronger Faith, surer Hopes, brighter visions of God and Heaven, and consequently found more fincere Pleasure and substantial delight in Spiritual than in Sensual Entertainments. All these Graces they obtained by a diligent Practice of the counsel of my Text, by making it their study daily and hourly to acquaint themselves with the word and works of God, and thence forming in their minds a worthy esteem and veneration for Heavenly things.

BUT it may be faid, that the Nation of Israel, to whom this counsel was first given, were not the more Heavenly-minded for it: Which is too true; but then the reason is, because they did not generally practife it: They notoriously neglected the study of the Divine Law, as we observed before, and ran after all the pomps and vain diversions of the Heathen, which carried them away to the worship of Idols. But fuch of them as followed the advice of my Text, proved very Holy men, and very constant in the worship of the true God. We learn from the Psalms and the Prophets, how comfortably they could entertain themselves with the Divine Word under all dispensa; tions; that they found it sweeter than honey to their Souls, and more precious than all the riches of the Earth. They declare it to be the fountain of all true Wisdom, that it enlightened their Darkness, dispelled their Terrors, proved as an Anchor to the Soul, or

rather

rather carried them above all the Storms and Tempests of this troublesome Life. Holy David begins his Book of Psalms with commemorating the Blessings of the man that delights in the Law of the Lord, and meditates in it night and day: And every verse of his 119th Psalm is dedicated to the praise and commendation of this study.

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TO come to the times of the Gospel; our Blessed Lord calls upon the Learned Jews of his time to fearch the Scriptures more diligently than they had done; and upbraids them with several errors about the Messiah, the Resurrection, &c. which they had run into for want of a due attention to the Holy Scriptures. For want of this it was, that Nicodemus, otherwise a great Rabbi, or Master in Israel, was amazed at Christ's Doctrine, when he preached to him of Regeneration or the new Birth. For want of this attention it was, that our Lord's Disciples were so furprized at the things which befell him, especially at his Death and Resurrection, which yet he made them fully to understand at the last, by explaining to them the Scriptures of the Law and the Prophets, which plainly foretold that Christ should die, and rise again the third day from the dead. But these material passages they had over-looked, though they were Religious men; which proves how necessary it is, according to the advice of my Text, to be very frequent, and almost continually exercised either in reading, hearing, or meditating on some part of the Divine Word, in order to have a clear understanding of it, and to see the full mind and meaning of God in it.

I shall now offer some Arguments and Reasons for the farther enforcement of the Doctrine of my Text.

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THE first shall be taken from the Dignity and Majesty of God, whose Word I am recommending, Is there any thing so necessary, so pleasant, so profitable for us to know, as our great Creator and Preferver, in whom we live, and move, and have our Being? whose Omniscience we confess; whose impartial Judgment at the last day we expect, and upon whose Sentence depends our everlasting Happiness or Mifery. It is amazing to confider that rational Creatures, in these circumstances of dependance upon God, should have an infatiable curiofity to fee and know the transitory things of this World, and neglect that knowledge which is able to make them wife unto Salvation. It is esteemed as a great accomplishment, for a man to be well read in the Histories of this World, and to know the ancient and present State of it: And yet what is there in both the Indies, which is comparable to the Treasures of Heaven? or what proportion do the lives and characters of all the Alexanders and Cafars, all the Emperors, Princes and Famous men that ever lived, bear to the infinite Excellencies of the Divine Majesty? They are no farther serviceable to our great end, our future Happiness, than as they may help to excite the fear and love of God in us; which I am afraid is not the effect which the study of them produces in most men; but they are commonly carried away and immerst in the stream of worldly Affairs, whereof their actions confift. Nay even the Spiritual refiner upon them must peruse many pages of fuch writings, before he can collect fo much Divine knowledge from them, as is contained in one fingle sentence of the Word of God.

A second argument to enforce the practice of the counsel in my Text, may be taken from the success

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of such practice in other cases. Many a man who is bred to the common arts and sciences of life, whether liberal or mechanick, finds a great deal of difficulty at first setting out, and looks forward with aversion and fear that he shall never attain to a Mastery in them. But if he often renews his Applications to conquer these difficulties, and has the affistance of a skilful Teacher, he not only grows perfect in his business, but often comes to take a great delight and pleasure in it, fo as not to be willing to live without it, even when he doth not want the gainful part of it. And may not the difficulties of Religion be made casie, and all the duties of it become delightful in time, by the like diligent practice? There is no doubt but they may. For God has not put us in such a way of Religion as will bewilder us, and bring us to nothing; but he has promised to be found of them that feek bim, and to dwell with those that delight in Communion with him. Our Lord affures us, that if we will use our Talents, we shall improve them; if we will do his Will, we shall taste of the sweets of his Doctrines, and be satisfied that they are of God.

AND we know that all this hath been verified in fact, by what we read of the lives of the most eminent Saints and Servants of God. Thus the great Author of my Text, when first God called him, and appointed him to deliver Israel out of Egypt, was asraid of the undertaking, and excused himself, saying, Lord, I am a man of slow speech, I have not the faculty of persuasion, I am not cloquent enough to deliver thy Message to any good effect: I pray thee therefore to imploy some other person about this business. In like manner the Prophet Jeremiah, being sent to the people of Judah, to warn them of the

Babylonian

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Babylonian Captivity, cry'd, Lord, I have not age and authority enough to speak to this People, I am too young for it. Yet we know how exceedingly well these men acquitted themselves in the work of their Lord, by the affiftance of his Grace and Bleffing upon their diligent Application. Nor must we think that the Royal Psalmist could presently compose his wonderful Prayers and Praises to God: He assures us, more than once, that they were the product of much Meditation, and that he had accustomed himself for many years to study much, night and day, in the Law of God. And the same may be said of other men, who have been eminent for their knowledge and practice of Religion. They received not these Talents as meer Gifts, by immediate infusion, but by much Study and Meditation in the word of God.

A third argument to enforce the counsel of my Text, is, the Necessity we are under of practising it, if ever we hope to be Heavenly-minded. For we know that the things of this World are continually crowding in upon us at all our senses: And we know how ready our Hearts are to bid them welcome, and give them entertainment, so far as for their sakes to exclude all thoughts and contemplations of Spiritual things. Every thing that we see and hear, every thing that we tafte and touch, leaves some earthly impresfion upon us. Now what is so proper to put this army of Aliens, this tumultuous crowd of worldly things to flight, and affert the Empire of our Heart to its rightful Lord, as his own word, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, according to St. Paul's character of it, Heb. iv. 12. But neither will this powerful word prevail, if but feldom apply'd: For there are Hearts which having received

it with gladness, quickly lose it again, by the overbearing multitude of worldly cares, which rush in

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THE best way therefore to maintain its ground which it has once got in the Heart, is to pour in more of the same, and send continual supplies to resist the World in its own way, that as the forces of it abound, so the Grace of God, by the frequent ministration of his Word and Ordinances, may much more abound.

LASTLY, a fourth argument to enforce the counsel of my Text, is the Means which God hath

afforded us for putting it in practice.

I doubt not but under the Mosaick Dispensation. there were Opportunities to perform every thing that the great Author of it enjoyns; though what they were, I cannot so readily say, nor is it now seasonable to enter upon an enquiry about them. Neither can I pretend to know what provisions are made for the Exercise of Religion in all Christian countries of the World. But thus much I can fafely affirm, that in this place where we live, the means of divine grace are so common and obvious, good Books, and especially the facred Scriptures so easy to be had, the Churches daily and hourly opened in one or other of our streets, that every Person, who has but a Heart to it, may very easily fulfil this Law of Moses, and hear the Divine Word when he walks by the way, when he lies down, when he rifes up; so as to have it thoroughly imprinted upon his Heart, and as much in his notice and observation, as if it were the signet on his hand, or frontlets between his eyes.

OF what benefit a diligent use of these opportunities would be to us all, I have declared in good measure, and desire it may be noted, that those who do

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make such use of them, show the fruits of it in their Lives and Conversations. Even among the labouring People in the streets it may be easily seen, who are frequent hearers, and who are despisers of God's word, by the Ravings, Execrations, and Blasphemies of the one fort, which are never heard to come out of the mouths of the other.

AND I will venture to point out the time, when not only lewd infernal Language, but all other enormities shall be reformed amongst us. That happy day will be seen, when People shall run as unanimoufly and eagerly to fill our Churches, as they now do to vain sports and diversions, and be as attentive to the Religious Offices, as they commonly are to what is said and done upon those trifling occasions; when they shall be as zealous of the knowledge and love of God, as they now are of the acquaintance and favour of great Men; when they shall be as sensible of all his Mercies, as they are of the Gifts of their earthly Benefactors, and as ready to adore and praise him for the same, as they are to honour and bow before these: when such a spirit as this shall prevail amongst us, then may we hope to fee bleffed Days.

AND why should we not hope to see them, when the Means of attaining them is so reasonable, and so easie? For there scarce wants any thing more than a zeal in the superior sort of People, to frequent the Churches of God as often as they are called to his Worship in them, and to render, upon all occasions, a due reverence and honour to his Holy Name and Word, making it evident that they would rather suffer in regards due to themselves, than have God dishonoured. Such Examples, enforced with good Counsels, would by degrees induce the multitude to render

render the like worship and honour to God. And though they should prove something averse and untractable at first, yet custom and fashion would bring all to a decent and becoming uniformity in Religion; which would be the best service that custom and sashion were ever known to do amongst us.

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to der ALL that we can contribute at present towards such a beginning, is, to offer up our humble Petitions to God, that he would touch the Hearts of those who have it in their power, to make him known upon Earth, and propagate his saving grace among the People, that his whole Word and Will may be done in us and by us, that so his gracious promises, annexed to such obedience, may be our sure Reward, both in this life, and that which is to come, through the Meits, &c.





SERMON XLII.

On the Fourth Sunday after EASTER.

EVENING.

D E U T. vii. 12.

Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments and keep and do them; that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the Covenant and the Mercy which he sware unto thy fathers.



ERY frequent are God's admonitions to his People, to excite them to a diligent observance of his Laws; and very needful they are, for two reasons. I. Because of the exorbitant affections of our minds,

which are apt to run astray, and break through the bounds of all good laws, especially the laws of Holiness and Virtue, which the agreeable to our judgment, are contrary to our natural inclinations. II. Because upon our obedience to God's Laws depends all our claim to his fatherly love and blessing. As he has made us rational creatures, so he treats us in the same reasonable way as we deal with one another. The relative duties of superiors and subjects among men

men, must be performed on both sides, otherwise there is an end of unity, peace, and truth, and confequently of all fociety and good government. If children and fervants rebel against their parents and masters, they are so far from deserving to be provided for and maintained upon the fcore of fush relation, that they should be punished more severely, and turned out of the family, as acting an unnatural part. No more reason have we to hope for any bleffing of God, on the account of our being his creatures and children, if we refuse him our obedience; this is what he has infilled on from the first production of our race upon earth. From Adam to the present generation he has always faid the same thing to men, as he fays in my Text, If ye will bonour and obey me as your God, then, and no otherwise, will I own and bless you as my children and people.

FROM hence, and from the whole body of facred writ, it is undoubtedly plain, that God deals with us upon the foot, not of natural but positive relation; a relation contracted by a Covenant and agreement which has passed between us, that he will be our God and Saviour, provided we hearken to his voice and do his will.

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AND indeed, if the Scripture were filent, even common sense would shew us the necessity of knowing God, and doing his Will, before we could rightly invocate him as our God. This may be illustrated by the following case. Suppose our first Parent were still alive upon earth, and by his innocence had preserved his happy estate in Paradise; and that many of his posterity, by sollowing his steps, were in the same condition. If others had sinned, and lost their happiness, as no doubt in all this time they might Vol. II.

have done, they would have been separated and banished at a great distance from the righteous. Their natural relation to them would have availed them nothing. And the case is much the same in the present state of things; unworthy children and fervants do but abuse their Correlatives, without any benefit to themfelves, when they call them parents and mafters. And tho' the weakness of man may condescend to own fuch relations, yet the honour and justice of God will not permit him to do it. If I am your father, fays he to his disobedient people, where is mine honour? if I am your master, where is the fear and reverence you owe me? This is fair reasoning, and the new Testament abounds with it. " Think not, fays John the Baptift to the Jews, to flatter your selves that you are de-Grended from Abraham, as if that would recommend ' you to God, without bringing forth the fruits of Repentance. If ye were the children of Abraham, fays Christ, ye would do his works.' This is exactly confonant to the meaning of my Text. God promifes to confer upon the Israelites the Mercies which he had sworn to their fore-fathers, but it was upon this condition, that they kept his Covenant and the Laws which he gave them. However, some of their later generations would needs claim his Promise to belong to them absolutely, as they were of the li-neage of Abraham: Than which nothing could be more contrary to the meaning of the divine Covenant, which was plainly granted upon the condition of faithful obedience. Where that was horribly violated, God withdrew his mercies, and gave up his People to descreed punishment. And so he declares to Eli, that tho' he had promised to continue his family in the Priests office for ever, yet now for the vile-

vileness of his fons, he revokes that Promise. For, favs he, those that bonour me, I will bonour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

BUT why do I go beyond this book of Deuteronomy, which is almost as full of curses denounced against disobedience, as of mercies promised to the obedient Israelites? Take an abridgment of them at the end of the ninth chapter, Thou shalt remember, says Moses, the Lord thy God, that he may establish his Covenant which he sware to thy fathers. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget him, and serve other Gods, I testifie against you this day, that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroys before your face, so shall ve perish: because ye would not be obedient to the voice of the Lord your God. What could be a plainer warning to the Israelites not to depend upon the Almighty for their God, if they did not take care to approve themfelves his People? The Oath, or the Covenant which he confirmed by an oath to their fathers, was not to be made good to them in case they forgot their God. and corrupted and changed their Religion. In for doing, they were to expect nothing but destruction, as much as the Canaanites, who for their impieties were rooted out before them.

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I know it is the caution of Moses to this People. ch. ix. not to flatter themselves that Canaan was given them as the reward of their fingular Piety and Virtue. No, fays he, but for the wickedness of these nations God drives them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which he sware to thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is no ways inconfistent with what I have been pleading for, that God loves and favours none but the obedient. These Israelites had often rebelled against God, and they had suffered as often, P 2

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by pestilence, or some other judgment. From whence they might learn the two things here inculcated upon them; 1st, That they had no cause to value themselves upon their allegiance to their God and King, which they had so often broken. 2dly, That they had no encouragement to indulge themselves upon the score of their relation to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God, says he, will give you the possession of Canaan, in pursuance of his Covenant with your pious fathers: but he will blast you in it, and disposses you of it, if you degenerate from their pie-

ty and virtue.'

METHINKS I hear the Almighty declaring, that he is no respecter of persons or families, any farther than he finds true piety in them, nor will be a God to any man, who does not approve himself his servant by an active obedience. I am sure our bleffed Lord tells the Jews, that they were not the children of Abraham, i. e. not so accounted of God; not being faithful to his Covenant, they had no title to his promises and bleffings; but that their works proclaimed they were from beneath, and that their father] was the prince of darkness. Throughout his Gospel the children of God are characterized as doers of his will, and others are represented as vain pretenders to the bleffings of his Religion. Particularly he reproves the formal hearers of his word, saying, Why call ye me Lord and Master, and never mind to practise the duties which I teach you? He foretells us, that in the day of judgment they will plead for themfelves, how they have heard his Word, and received his Sacraments; but that if they be found workers of iniquity, that plea shall avail them nothing. He teaches

teaches us that our filial obedience and imitation of God, is the best ground we can have to invocate him as our Father. For when one of the assembly where he was preaching, told him, that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, he stretched forth his hand to his Disciples and said, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever doth the will of my father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother.

THESE things being so, it concerns us to take heed that we be not mis-led by two sorts of men, whose principles and practices are very repugnant to

these Scriptures.

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THE first fort are those who imagine God to be equally pleased with all mankind, who live according to the law of nature, and best light which they can attain to: and that he is bound by the laws of creation, and by all his attributes of justice, mercy, and goodness, to be a Saviour to these, as much as to those who are in covenant with him, and live in the knowledge and practice of his revealed Will. And for this they think they have good proof and warrant from some passages even of Scripture it self. But whatever the meaning of fuch passages may be, which I have not now time to examine, it is plain that the general voice of Scripture is directly contrary to this affertion. When St. Peter affirms, 'That in every ' nation the man that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him; and when St. Paul teaches, 'That the Gentiles which have no revelation, have the Law written in their hearts;' If their meaning were as these men interpret them, they would flatly contradict their own writings. For they affure us, that no man can have a sufficient and saving P 3 knowledge

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knowledge of the true God, but by the revelation which he has made of himself, not barely by the works of nature, but in the writings of the old and new Testament. And lest we should think that, God having redeemed mankind by Jesus Christ, the benefit of this Redemption may be extended to those who never heard of him, nor put up a prayer in his name; they affere, with the best reason, and from the mouth of their great Master, that without faith it is impossible to please God; and that this Faith must be formed by the reading and hearing of his holy Word; that if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of bis. That if we will become the adopted children of his Father, and members of his celestial Family, we must actually be engrafted into his mystical body the Church, and enter into Covenant with him by the ministration of his Word and Sacraments.

THIS is the doctrine of the holy Apostles: their preaching, their writings, their sufferings, their miracles were all intended to persuade us, that the fatherly love of God, and the immortal blessings of his Kingdom, are to be obtained no otherwise but by the Knowledge and Faith of Jesus Christ; and they forbid us to trust to uncovenanted Mercies, and unrevealed ways of Salvation. And if any other, not only Man, but Angel, presume to preach a different Gospel, or method of Salvation, they pronounce him accursed.

BUT this different Gospel is certainly taught by those who say, that God is as much our Father upon the score of Creation as Redemption; that we can sufficiently know him by the light of natural reason; that he is bound to save us, if we walk in this light, and are good moral Men, tho' no good Christians.

If this be true, there could be no need of Christ's coming into the World, to make an atonement for the sins of it, and to bring Life and Immortality to light through his Gospel; since, according to these men, God is at peace with us without Christ, and has written his Law in our hearts, whereby we may

sufficiently serve and please him.

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AND indeed the design of these men, who so highly magnify the laws and light of nature, as they style it, is to render the Gospel of Christ of none effect, to dissolve his Church, and abolish his Religion, to lessen the majesty and honour of God, as if sins against him did not deserve that curse which the Scripture says they have brought upon mankind. By these men God is brought something lower, and man raifed fomething higher than they are fet forth in scripture characters. They love to fancy the Almighty as one of like passions and affections with themselves. And because they find no zeal in themselves at the voice of curfing and blasphemy, they persuade themselves that there is the same lenity in God; that he is not so tender of his honour and glory, as of the lives and flourishing estate of blasphemers; whom they punish and restrain no otherwise than Eli did his sons, with a little formal reproof, and that but rarely given. This Impunity they will needs ground upon the forbearance and long fuffering of God, not indeed as he is represented in Scripture, for there he is ever said to be jealous of the honour of his name, but according to the natural notions which they think they have Such notions have opened a door to the most impudent Atheism and Contempts of God, for they have staid the hand of human justice from punishing fuch crimes, out of an opinion, that they do not affect P 4

feet the publick welfare, and should be left to the judgment of him against whom they are com-

mitted.

THESE are some of the reasons why we should beware of those who set up the light of nature against that of revelation. For as by such a light they see little of God, so by their mean di'courses and reasoning about him, they bring his Majesty, Glory, and Honour to a low account in the World; they expose Religion to the outrages and infults of Atheifts, fo as to turn this Earth into a region of darkness: and no wonder, for even Heaven it felf would shine no more, were it as destitute of zeal for the glory of God.

2dly, ANOTHER fort of men that we should take care not to follow, are those who, allowing the Covenant of God in Christ to be divine, and necesfary to Salvation, flatter themselves, that they are comprehended in it, and shall reap the benefit of it, tho' they are grofly deficient in the duties which it

injoyns them.

IT is much to be lamented, and it has been the occasion of all the great calamities in the World, that the Laws of God have been no more regarded by those who have received them, and engaged to obey them. But it has been the complaint of all ages, that the number of men truly fearing God and hating Iniquity, has been very scarce. The People of Israel were but a small nation in comparison of the World about them, as Moses observes in this very chapter whence my Text is taken; and yet how few, even of this small nation, were free from that stiff neck and untractable Spirit, which would not bear the gentle yoke of God's Laws? Of all that came out of Egypt, above

bove twenty years old, but two were found worthy to enter into the land of Canaan. And that generation which entred, quickly forgot the Law which Moses and Josbua with most earnest exhortations of their dying breath recommended to them. Afterwards, under their best Kings and most regular Government, the number of their truly good men was but like the gleaning of grapes after a vintage, as we may conclude from the Pfalms and the Prophets. Nay, Teremiab ch. v. challenges their great city of Jerufalem to shew him a man, that executed judgment and

fought after the truth.

SO that if we find them seldom blest with that health and peace, that plenty and victory which are here promised; if we hear them often groaning under pestilence, famine and sword, we see the cause of their misfortune in their manners, and must justifie the truth of God in all his dispensations towards them. For his promises and threatnings were all conditional. He set life and death before them, and put it into their own power to make themselves happy or miserable. Since they would needs disobey God, and were so plainly and constantly forewarned by him, that the consequences of their disobedience would prove fatal to them, they had nothing but their own perverseness to blame for

I wish the ages and nations of Christians had not too commonly imitated this perverse and gain-saying generation of Jews; for then they had not been fo often confumed by the like punishments. in covenant with the same God, and may depend upon his Mercies, or dread his Judgments, according to our observance or non-observance of his Laws.

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Let no man fancy, as some have been apt to do, that the bleffings of our religion are meerly spiritual, confifting only in the inward joys of the foul, and the felicity of the future state. St. Paul thought otherwife, when he said, Godliness is profitable for all things, baving the promises of the present life, as well as of that which is to come. And who can doubt but that the Laws of Christ are excellently adapted to obtain both, were they but duly established in christian Governments, and applied to the conduct both of publick and private life.

IT is well observed by one of our ancient Fathers, that the primitive Christians made Truth and Justice fo much the rule of their dealings, that they had no occasion for oaths to gain them credit: for they were fo careful to speak the truth, that their bare word was esteemed as valid as any oath. And in all their conversations, how familiar soever, they never gave a loofe to their tongues, but governed them fo, that no idle, unseemly, or disrespectful word might escape them. 'This ingenuous and modest spirit of our religion,

- fays he, invited people of all nations and languages.
- of all ranks and conditions, to refort to our Ser-
- · mons in the greatest multitudes, as teaching doct-
- frines which far exceeded the precepts of their mo-
- e ral Philosophers, viz. How to moderate not on-
- by the cravings of the external fenfes, and refrain
- from intemperate actions, but to purify the thoughts
- and intentions of the heart; not only to prune the
- branches of finful lust, but to kill it in the root, and to strangle concupiscence in its first motions.
- · They were charmed to hear our facred Oracles in-
- firucting them how to bear the provocations of enemies

nemies with a firm unshaken mind, and not to meditate revenge, but to recompense injuries with friendly offices: to make the poor and needy partners with them in their happy circumstances: to treat all men with humanity, and to entertain strangers with as much kindness and hospitality, as if they were our brethren.

WHAT an agreeable genius must such doctrines, when duly practifed, as they were at first, produce in mankind? They recommended Christianity so much to the World, that it was quickly mounted to the helm of civil government, to the feat of imperial dignity. Where had it been preserved pure and sincere from the politicks of this wicked World, how many bloody battles, burnings of cities, ravagings of countries, particular murders, had been prevented? In what part of Christendom could lying, stealing, and all forts of frauds and injustice, supported by innumerable perjuries, have grown fo flagrant and frightful as we have known them, had the laws of Chrift been maintained and upheld against them? Could the overflowings of Impiety have thus prevailed over us, if the sense of the divine Majesty, his power and providence, his mercies and judgments, had been duly recognized and celebrated? Could the legions of darkness, the lusts of uncleanness, the monsters of gluttony and drunkenness, of pride and vanity, have gained fuch an ascendant, and become so fashionable that they are above reproof, if we had ordered our conversation by those rules of humility and modesty, of temperance and chastity, which the Gospel injoyns us as part of our christian Covenant?

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SUCH breaches of our Covenant have exposed us to the judgments of an angry God, and often tur-

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ned our joy into mourning, and our feasts into hunger and bitterness of soul. They cause the air to be unwholsome, the earth to be barren, the sea and winds to be tempestuous and contrary to us. They strengthen the hands of our enemies, and make all our adversaries to insult and triumph over us. They often kindle a devouring fire in our cities and habitations. They destroy the fruits of our fields, and the encrease of our slocks and herds. And they stop up the channels of our commerce, and reduce us to poverty and want. All these calamities are owing to the breaches of our Covenant with our God.

IF we were but true and faithful in our obedience to his laws, he would manifestly shew himself to be our gracious Saviour and Protector; he would lift up the light of his countenance upon us, and command all the elements, all his creatures to be favourable to us; he would open the store-house of his mercies, and not suffer us to want any manner of thing that is good for us.

IF any man ask me, how I know this? I answer, By the knowledge which I have of God's Laws, which have a natural tendency and fitness to procure this happiness for us: by the abundance of his promises, which belong as much to the present, as ever they did to the most ancient Church of God: and by the testimony of those who have experienced the blessed effects of such faithful obedience.

I confess such blessings have seldom been very entire or long lasting, by reason of the impersection of mens obedience in the best of times; but they have always born a proportion to it. I believe there is scarce any serious man who has lived long in the World, in such circumstances as have led him to observe the

state of it, but he will be able to say, that he has seen the mercies and judgments of God dispensed amongst men, according as their religion and manners have deserved. When he has been honoured, his favour has shone out in publick mercies; and when atheism and iniquity have abounded, he has visited them with the frowns and tokens of his displeasure: Exactly agreeable to his promises and threatnings in his holy Word.

TO fuch promises and threatnings let us give awful attention, and believe that God speaks them to us, as truly and earnestly as he did to the people of Ifrael. At the same time let us consider, that he reaches out the Tables of his holy Laws to us, faying. Behold, I set before you life and death, bleffing and curfing, in your obedience or transgression of these laws. These are the statutes and oracles whereby I have revealed my nature and attributes, my will and worship to you; take care to love and fear and ferve me by these rules, and in so doing you will obtain my bleffings to your selves and your children. 'For be affured that I am a faithful God, who keep 'covenant and mercy for ever with those that love 'me, and obey my Commandments. I will love them. bless them, and multiply them; I will bless the fruit of their body, and of their land, their corn and ' wine and oyl; the increase of their kine, and the 'flocks of their sheep. They shall be blessed in the 'city and in the field; when they go out, and when they come in. I will smite their enemies when they ' rife up against them, and turn away the pestilence ' that it shall not destroy them.'

LET us be persuaded that God makes these promises to us, and let us not be such insidels as to question either his power or his will to perform them.

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Is not he as omnipresent, and as all-sufficient to help men, now as ever? Can his mercies fail, and his goodness be exhausted? His arm is not shortened, that it cannot protect us, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear us: only let us refrain from such iniquities as separate between us and our God, and from such sins as provoke him to hide his face from us. Let us keep Innocence, and take heed to do that which is right: speaking the truth, and shewing mercy, and walking with that humility which becomes the Gospel.

WE shall be inexcusable, we shall never be able to answer it to God, nor our own consciences, nor our children, if we bring down the Judgments of Heaven upon our land, when it is in our own power to avert them. And the averting of them is always in our own power. Fear God, and keep his commandments, and then you may depend upon the blessings of his Covenant. And they are the blessings of this life, and of that which is to come, which he hath granted us with the Son of his love, the Mediator of this Covenant, whom he hath given for our redemption, and with whom he can deny us nothing that pertains to life and happiness. To whom &c.





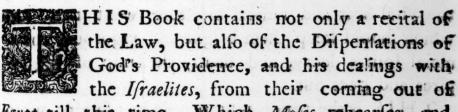
SERMON XLIII.

On the Fifth Sunday after EASTER.

MORNING.

DEUT. viii. 3.

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with Manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy Fathers know: that he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, doth man live.



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Egypt till this time. Which Moses rehearles, and calls to their remembrance, to persuade them to love and sear God, and trust him in the way of their Duty, for support and protection in all Necessities, as having had manifold experience of his Power, Mercy, and readiness to help them.

IN particular he exhorts them here to remember how wonderfully God led them through the Wildensels, a frightful scene of dearth and samine, affording nothing

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nothing comparable to the number of mouths which were to be fed and maintained there. To supply the defects of which place, God rained down Manna upon them from Heaven, and gave them Bread by a continual miracle; which though it was quite another thing from the Grain produced by the Earth, and of a more light and airy substance, yet God endued it with such a Virtue, that it kept the People in good heart and strength for forty years together.

THE end and design of God in feeding his People with this Manna, was to teach them, That man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. The meaning of which is this; the fettled, ordinary way of subfifting and preferving our life and strength is, by feeding on the creatures and fruits of the Earth, of which those are the principal and most useful, whereof we make Bread; insomuch that under the word Bread is generally comprehended all the necessary food and provision of life. Those that are long destitute of Bread, are not in a condition to live; they are said to starve; the vital heat and radical moisture want that fuel which should keep them bright and vigorous, the animal spirits decay, and finally the lamp of life expires and goes out.

THIS is the reason why people in a famine, when denied their usual and proper sustenance, will eat any trash and unclean vermin, which they abominate at other times, rather than die with hunger, which must be the case, if they have not Bread, or something instead of it. This was the reason why Israel in the Wilderness were so uneasy and sull of murmurings at the conduct of their Leaders, who had brought them out of Egypt, a Country which gene-

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there was no appearance of any thing answerable to the demands of their prodigious numbers. This struck them almost dead with the apprehension of perishing for want of Bread: For Man who is formed out of the Earth, cannot naturally live without feed-

ing on the fruits and products of it.

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'T I S true indeed, there is a great disproportion in men's appetites and cravings after these things; some requiring more, others less for the maintenance of life and strength. And some few there have been, who by use and practice have inured themselves to undergo long Fasts, and have lived many days without eating or drinking any thing at all. The Sacred Hifory tells us of two meer Men, Moses and Elias. who lived forty days and forty nights in perfect abitinence: But what are forty days to forty years? and if we could reckon up a thousand such instances. what are they in comparison of fix hundred thousand Israelites, besides their Children, and a promiscuous multitude of other People who accompanied them in their Travels? For all these to live together in the wilds of Arabia, where were but few, scattering, barren trees, with a fandy soil, unfit for cultivation, and no Inhabitants that either could or would furnish them with Provisions; this was in human estimation absolutely impossible; here were no natural means of Subfifting.

BUT that which is impossible with Men, is possible with God: And very easy it is for us to conceive the reason of it: For he that created the Fruits of the Earth for the sustenance of Man, can by the same Almighty Power sustain him with Air, or give him any thing else instead of Bread, which shall have the Vol. II.

fame nutritive quality. This we must needs conclude he had Power to do, though he never had done it; but he hath done it, and given a most signal instance of it in the History referred to by the words of my Text. For in about a month's time after they came out of Egypt, when they had spent their Provision which they had brought thence with them, they complained that they wanted Bread; whereupon God rained down about their Camp a small Grain, as small as the hoar-frost, which Moses directed them to gather, and boil it, and bake it so as to make Bread of it: This they called Manna, which is as much as to fay, What is this? For they knew not what name to give it, having never feen any thing like it before, according to what is here faid in my Text, He fed thee with Manna, which neither thou nor thy fathers had known. Thus he fed them forty years together, i. e. from the second month of their coming out of Egypt, 'till they had passed Jordan, and encamped in the Plains of Jericho in the Land of Canaan, and did eat of the old Corn of the Land; and then on the morrow the Manna ceased to descend upon them, as it is expresly said Joshua v. 12.

FOR the like number of years, and by the same good providence of God, the Raiment which the Israelites brought out of Egypt lasted through the course of their Travels, without waxing old or wearing out, Deut. xxix. c. neither did their feet gall nor swell in all their tedious marches, which was a miraculous preservation, considering that they commonly went bare-foot in very hot climates, and in unfrequented,

rugged, stony ways.

ALL these Dispensations wherewith they were exercised, were intended to humble them, and make

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Fifth Sunday after EATSER. 227

them consider the vanity of all Worldly trust and considence. For whereas our Pride is most apt to swell in the affluence of sumptuous Fare, and the variety of rich and glittering Apparel, these Temptations were removed from the Israelites, in a desolate Wilderness which would not afford such accommodations. And yet they wanted not such Food and Raiment as served to keep them in good Health and Strength, and enabled them to perform all requisite actions of human Life: And at the same time suggested this pious and practical conclusion to them, that man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

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THIS is a noble Argument to persuade and encourage us to trust God in the way of our Duty, and depend upon him, that if the performance of such Duty subject us to bodily wants, he will relieve us: if it involve us in sufferings, he will provide a way for our deliverance, and open a door for our escape. Whatever circumstances may attend our Obedience. we need not trouble our felves any farther, than to be fure that the work we are called to do, is the will of God. Which being clear and plain to us, we have nothing to fear of any ill consequence which may attend the execution of it. For he who commands. is able to support us under our work, and to reward us for it; and we dishonour him when we distrust him; because such distrust implies a doubt in us of God's All-sufficiency, Faithfulness, Goodness, and Presence to help us; which yet he has abundantly promised to do; and such promises he has made good by manifold and undeniable performances. By such affiftances he distinguishes himself from the Gods of the Heathen, and claims the superiority over them, avouching Q 2

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avouching that he is God indeed, and they lying Vanities, and false Pretenders to a Divine Power.

OUR Saviour observes to his Disciples, Matt. vi. 32. that the Gentiles who worshipped Idols, were above all things follicitous for their bodily welfare, what they should eat and drink, and wherewith they should be cloathed. But fays he to his own, Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and then all temporal things which your Heavenly Father knows ye stand in need of, shall be super-added to you. Accordingly when he sent his first Ministers to preach the Gospel, he undertook to provide for them, that is, to dispose mens Hearts to entertain them in a friendly hospitable manner, so as that they should not need to furnish themselves with any provision for their journey, nor be under a necessity of seeking their bread from house to house. And afterwards upon his demanding of them, Luke xxii. 35. When I fent you forth without purse and scrip and shoes, lacked ye any thing? and they answered, Nothing, Lord.

FARTHER, when much People followed him in defolate places to hear his Word, and had continued with him all day fasting, and were at a great distance from any Town or Market where they could buy Food, he fed them by a Miracle, Matt. xiv. partly to reward them for their attendance on him, and partly to confirm their Faith in his promise just now mentioned, that while they studied to serve God, he would graciously supply them with the necessaries of Life. So likewise when Peter had lent him his Ship, Luke v. as a convenient place whence he might preach to the People that stood on the shore, without being thronged by them, he recompensed him for this accommodation, by causing a great

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great shoal of Fish to come to his net; whereas before this, he had laboured hard all the night, and

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THESE Instances may suffice to shew the Power and Providence of God, that he is both able and ready to maintain his Servants in the performance, of their Duty. Let them but act in Faith, as men who have a lively sense of his Inspection over them, and that he will honour, love, and succour those that glorifie him, and they will certainly find the effect to be

just and right according to his Promise.

BUT then we must take heed that our Faith do not degenerate into Presumption; we must not depend upon any Divine Promise for relief to be sent us in a miraculous manner, and by a special hand from Heaven, when the ordinary means of obtaining it are before us. We must observe, that Israel were no longer fed with Manna, after they were arrived in Canaan, and had the Corn of the Land to make bread of. Nor did they expect that, because the Red-Sea and Fordan fled back at their approach, and left them a way to pass over on dry land, that therefore every Brook and River in time to come would do the like. and give them the same easie passage. And though the Walls of Jericho fell down at their shouting and founding of their Trumpets, yet we do not read that they ever tried this experiment before any other City, but in all their future Sieges, they proceeded by the usual Arts of War.

IN cases of great exigence, in matters which were needful to be done, but out of their own power to perform, there the hand of God was always ready to help them by a new and wonderful way. And he gave them special directions how to execute their own

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part in such Adventures. But when they had no such Divine warrant, they went not out of the ordinary way of probable and prudent means to attain their ends, acknowledging God to be the Disposer of all events, and praying to him to prosper their Endeavours, and crown them with success.

MORE than this they held to be finful prefumption, a making too bold with the Wisdom and Power of God. Which their great Legislator had forbidden them to do, Deut. vi. 16. Te shall not tempt the Lord your God, i. e. Ye shall not put his Power to the tryal in your own way, nor expect miraculous Demonstrations of it, when there is no necessity. Thus I think our Lord has taught us to interpret these words. For when the Devil, in his Temptation of him, Matt. iv. challenged him to demonstrate himfelf the Son of God, by casting himself down from a Pinnacle of the Temple; for if his pretentions were true, he could receive no harm by the fall; our Saviour replied, It is written, Thou shall not tempt the Lord thy God. We must not forsake the means of our own safety, and treat these bodies as if they were invulnerable, and precipitate our selves into evident destruction, hoping that God will miraculously interpose and rescue us from it, when we have neither reason nor revelation for such hope, but on the contrary, a plain way before us to escape the Danger.

THIS may help to correct their error, who under a pretence of caring for the Soul, and laying up treasure in Heaven, neglect that business of life which should get bread for themselves and their families, and so become a burden to the World, and fall into all the Temptations which attend Poverty and Want. But what perverseness is this, to run into by ways, when

when the way of God's Commandments is most plain and open? For though he has commanded us principally to Worship and Honour him, and above all things to feek an Inheritance in his Heavenly Kingdom, yet he has ordained and enacted a Law, that we should attend our secular Affairs and Imployments fix days, if our Circumstances require it, and set apart the seventh for his publick Worship and Service.

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HE knows (for it is his own sentence) that the greatest part of Mankind must get their bread by the labour of their hands and sweat of their brows; and consequently cannot well spend more time in the publick places of Divine worship, than he has enjoyned But is any, even of the lowest and most laborious rank of People, to be told, that they may offer up their private Prayers night and morning, and commonly oftner if they have a Heart to it, without neglecting their Imployments? Can any but an Atheist doubt, that to recommend himself to God. and implore his Bleffing upon his Labours, is the way to be protected and prospered? Can the most encumbered man pretend, that he has not some leisure, in the most busie hours of his Life, to lift up his Heart to God, and remember his latter end, and be mindful of improving those Graces and Virtues in his Soul, which must accompany him to another World?

THIS leads us to confider that part of ourselves which cannot live by bread alone, I mean the rational Soul, which must be nourished by every word that

proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

THIS was one reason why God fed his People with Manna rained down from Heaven. It was a Sacrament or visible fign of the Spiritual Food of their Souls, which descended from the same place in

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his Laws and Ordinances, and the influences of his Holy Spirit. Now the Soul of man is a Spirit, and can receive no other benefit from material food, but as it serves to maintain the human body, and keep it as a fit Habitation for the residence of the Mind. But the proper food of the Soul is Rational and Divine Discourse, Holy Meditations, Heavenly Prayers, every Science which improves the knowledge of God, the sense of his Excellencies, which refines and exalts our ideas of Virtue, which cools and extinguishes all sinful Lusts in us, and quickens those affections which ascend above this World, and settle upon those Objects which alone can minister sincere joy and comfort to us: Such Exercises as these are the proper food of the Mind of Man.

THAT this is so, is evident in the different genius and manners of the World. Go through the several ranks of mankind, and you will find the generality unable to keep up their spirits, or enjoy themselves without the pleasures, honours or profits of this life: Exclude them from their company, debar them of their mirth and jollity, shut up the theatres and places of diversion, and they quickly shrink up into nothing, and become like a Body without a Soul: Hereby they tell us in effect, that they feast upon these things, and have no Life but what they derive from them.

ON the contrary, some sew there are of a heavenly Temper, who take pleasure in spiritual Things, and are strengthened and refreshed by holy Exercises. These will easily and willingly hearken to the word of God, and embrace all opportunities to have Communion with him. You shall not find them framing excuses to absent themselves from any divine Ordinance,

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nor observe them to be stupid and weary under the administration of it: But they come to it with an appetite; you may see it is their meat and drink; their Souls have a hungering and thirsting after it. They do not desire to live by Bread alone; though they abound never so much in worldly Goods, yet they have no enjoyment of them, without the true Manna and Bread of Heaven, the Word of God.

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THIS, I am persuaded, is so agreeable to the sentiments of every one that hears me, that I need not use many words to enforce it. Those whose Souls are too much pressed down with earthly things, are not insensible of the pressure. If they have not an appetite for the Word of God, they have a spiritual sickness which causes them to disrelish it; and, like other sick People, they are dissatisfied with their constitution, and wish it were otherwise with them.

WHEREFORE in order to correct their taste, and cure their aversion for spiritual Things, let them withdraw the Fuel which has been applied to their carnal Lusts and Passions. For he who immerses himself in these lower enjoyments of the animal life, will never be able to raise his affections to things above: He must first take heed that he be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness; he must wean his heart from the stage and the theatre, he must abstain from those things which are apt to inslame his passions, and to put his spirits into an extravagant motion; he must see the vanity of these things, and regret the damage which they have done him, before he can be serious enough to attend with any profit upon the Ordinances of God.

WHEN shall it be, that we shall be able to say with the holy Psalmist, that like as the hart pant-

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eth after the water-brooks, so thirsteth our soul after God; that his word is sweeter to us than honey, and his law dearer than thousands of gold and filver; that our foul is fatisfied as it were with marrow and farness, when our mouth praiseth him with joyful lips? Do we think that he dissembled with God, when he made these high Professions? No doubt but they were literally true; and we question them for no other reason, but because our dull sensual hearts have never been touched with any fuch longings: But we fee they are attainable by Men of like passions with our selves; let us then set our hearts upon their proper Objects, 'till they are thus warmed and affected.

THE Objects are presented to us in the most lively manner, by a greater than Moses, even the Son of God, who is the true bread of life which came down from Heaven, of which the Ifraelites Manna was but a type: Whosoever eateth of this Bread, shall live for ever; and every one of us is invited to eat of it in

the Word and Sacraments.

SO that we may truly fay, we live not by Bread slone, but by the Word of God: It is not meer Bread and Wine that we partake of in the Sacrament, but by the Word of God they are virtually made to us the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

LET us not defire to live by Bread alone; let us not make this Holy Sacrament less than Christ hath made it; let us not neglect to receive it for the Ends to which he has instituted it: He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, fays he, bath eternal life; and I will raife him up at the last day.

AND that we may be always fit and worthy to partake of this immortalizing food, let us constantly abstain from the Bread of iniquity, intemperance, and

luxury,

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luxury, considering that such Bread is so far from strengthening us, that it weakens and destroys our Bodies as well as our Souls. It fills us with the matter of all bodily diseases, and with the seeds of all vitious and corrupt affections; our thoughts become gross and brutish, and savour of nothing but things which are sensual and devilish; he that makes his Belly his God, his Imaginations are only evil continually.

HAPPY were it for us, if we could give a turn to such appetites; which we must do, if ever we relish the joys of Christ's Heavenly Kingdom: In order to which enjoyments we must now find a delight and pleasure in his Word and Ordinances, which nothing else can beget in us, but a frequent partici-

pation of them.

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LET us not then labour for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life; let us hunger and thirst after Righteousness, and make it our meat and drink to do the Will of our Heavenly Father; so shall he bring us to our promised Land, our Heavenly Ganaan, where we shall have no need to serve him with these present Elements, these Types and Resemblances, but then most strictly worship him in Spirit and in Truth to all Eternity, through his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom &c.





SERMON XLIV.

On the Fifth Sunday after EASTER.

EVENING.

DEUT. ix. 6.

Understand therefore that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it, for thy righteeusness; for thou art a stiff-necked people.



HE People of Israel being ready to pass over Fordan, and take possession of the promised land, which was full of fenced cities and walled towns, abounding with strong, gigantick, and warlike in-

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habitants; Moses encourages them not to be afraid, affuring them that the same God who had brought them out of Egypt, and carried them through the Wilderness with an invincible arm, would finish his work by subduing this People before them, and driving them out of their habitations.

BUT he warns them to take heed how they imputed their success to their own merits. He knew how apt the heart of man is to be exalted with prosperity, so as not to see the hand of God in it, but to fancy that some kind of self-sufficiency or excellency was the occasion of it.

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TO prevent this pride and self-conceit, which would be sure to hinder them from seeing the goodness of God, and rendering him due praise for it, Moses tells them plainly, and repeats it over and over again, that it was not for their righteousness that God gave them the possession of Canaan; but for the wickedness of the old Inhabitants he drove them out, and for his oath's sake which he had sworn to the Patriarchs, he planted Israel in their room.

SO that there were two reasons of this great Re-

volution in Canaan.

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I. THE abominable wickedness of the Canaanites, which was great in the days of Abraham, four hundred and thirty years before this time, and had been growing apace ever since, 'till it came to that fulness which now caused the evil-doers to be destroyed and rooted out from the face of the earth.

WHEN the Scripture says, that the measure of their fins was filled up, the meaning is, that all forts and conditions of men among them were guilty of all the fins, natural and unnatural, which mankind are capable of committing: detestable idolatries, diabolical forceries, fraudulent and corrupt dealings, open oppression and violence, and such a deluge of carnal lusts as sunk them much below the dignity of human nature, and made them viler even than the brute beafts which have no understanding. This character of them we may collect from several passages of the writings of Moses; from whence we may likewise conclude, that all their People were guilty of these fins, either by actual commission, or approbation of them. Their mighty men were mighty enemies of all forts of serious piety and true virtue. God had long waited to see if any man would arise among them.

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them, who was worthy the name of a Reformer and good Governour, who would enact good laws, and execute them effectually. But when he faw, that every new generation was trained up in the fins of their fore-fathers, and aggravated them with many additions of their own, then he poured out the vials of his wrath upon them, and confumed them as brands fit for nothing but the fire.

II. THIS Revolution was brought about, in order to accomplish the Promise which God had made to Abraham; who was a man of a heavenly Spirit, and loved God above all things, above his father's house, above his own life, above the life of his son Isaac: in all which respects he was tried, and made full proof of his piety, that God could lay no command upon him, which he would not readily obey. In recompense of which obedience God promised to give him the land of Canaan for an Inheritance. He told him indeed, that he could not put him into the present possession of it, because the iniquity of the Anorites was not then full, they were not yet ripe for destruction; but that his posterity should certainly have the enjoyment of it.

AND this Promise is often alledged by Moses as the ground of all the wonderful works which God wrought for Israel, and why he chose them before all nations of the earth for his peculiar People, not only to establish them in the land of Canaan, but to place his name and worship among them, to constitute them the guardians and sountain of true Religion, where it should be preserved till that seed of Abraham should come, in whom it was decreed that all nations of the earth should be blessed: by whose ministry the word of the Lord should go out of Sion, and

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and his worship from Jerusalem, and enlighten the dark corners of the World with the knowledge of the true God, and the way of everlasting Salvation. This is the reason why Israel was brought with so many miracles into Canaan; not fo much for the inheritance of that country, as to answer that other part of the Promise made to their ancestor, that in his feed all nations of the earth should be blessed; and so we are to understand it in this chapter and other places, where it is faid, that God brought Israel hither, that he might perform the word which he sware to their fathers. So it was understood by Zacharias father of John Baptist, when, in contemplation of the approaching nativity of our Lord, he bleffed God for performing his promifed Mercy, and remembering his Covenant, even the Oath which he had fworn to their fathers.

THUS the wickedness of the Canaanites was the cause of their loss; and the reason of Israel's succeeding in their possessions, was the favour which God had to their pious Ancestors, and the Covenant which he. had made with them, to give their posterity this veryland. But as for those Israelites who travelled with Moses in the Wilderness, we hear what a character he gives of them in my Text. The Lord, says he, doth not give you the possession of Canaan, for your righteousness; for ye are a stiff-necked, self-willed, untractable people. This was a reproach which was often cast upon them; and how well they deferved it, is proved in this chapter. Remember, says he, and forget not, how thou provokeds the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, till ye came to this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord. This charge he proves by

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by an induction of several passages of their manners, particularly that of the Golden-calf, which was a most audacious and astonishing act of rebellion against God. For they framed this Idol for their deity and leader to Canaan, as they publickly profest; even at Horeb, and that but a few weeks after they had feen the Glory of God, and heard him proclaim his law with an audible voice, with the folemnity of thunder and lightning, and the found of a trumpet; in the beginning of which Law he strictly forbad them to make any figure or fimilitude of the Deity: and they agreed, faying, We will do according to all that the Lord our God commands us: and these words they presently ratified with facrifice. Now after such serious and facred transactions, so quickly to break the Covenant which they had just made with God, to violate it in fuch a gross and scandalous manner; what could be more provoking? If they had been tolerably obedient in all other instances, yet this alone was sufficient to bring them under the imputation which Moses here lays upon them, of a stiff-necked and rebellious People: a People who had no merit to plead for any of God's favours, much less for his gracious leading and conducting them, after this fin, to a land flowing with milk and honey.

UPON this occasion Moses tells them how he acted. He came down from the mount with the two Tables of the Law in each hand; and when he came into the Camp of Israel, and saw the Abomination which they had committed, he threw the Tables out of his hands, and brake them before their eyes. These Tables being written with the singer of God, it is not probable that Moses broke them of his own meer motion, and indignation at his Peoples sin. For the

it became him in such circumstances to testifie the greatest concern for the violated honour of God; yet to have made so free with the facred Tables, without a higher authority than his own for so doing, would have favoured of a culpable rashness and indiscreet zeal. And therefore I conclude with some learned men, that God directed him to do this before he came out of the divine Presence in the mount: For there we find the Almighty apprizes him of the fin which the People had committed in his absence: and he tells him of his purpose to destroy them for it, and to blot out their name from under Heaven, and to make him a greater and mightier nation than they. Having faid this, he bids him go down to them quickly, to acquaint them, no doubt, with this refolution, and to break the Tables before their faces, to intimate thereby, that fince they had broken their Covenant with God, his obligations towards them were disfolved; that fince they had renounced their God, he had rejected them from being his People. This agrees with what followed hereupon. For Moses quickly returned to God in the mount, and fell down before him, and interceded for the offenders with long fasting and ardent supplications and prayers; begging of him, for the honour of his name among the Gentiles, who had heard of his Promises to this People, and for the fake of their Ancestors to whom he had made them, not to be so far offended with this their heinous wickedness, as to destroy them for it. By which intercession God was pacified at that time, and condescended to renew his Covenant with Israel, upon two other Tables of stone, without expressing any displeasure at Moses for having broken the first. Whence we conclude, that he broke them by VOL. II. the R

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the divine Appointment, for the reason I have mentioned.

AND this was enough to shew what little reafon Israel had to flatter themselves, or to suffer so
much as a thought to whisper in their hearts, that
God gave them the land of Canaan as the reward of
their religious and upright walking with him. The
history of the Golden-calf was enough to strike them
dumb, and shame them for ever out of such vain
boasting; for which purpose Moses here brings it to
their remembrance. Understand therefore that the Lord
thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it, for
thy righteousness: for thou art a stiff-necked people.

IF it be faid, that in these very writings of Mofes, the Israelites are sometimes styled a holy People, which might warrant them to claim some kind of merit to themselves: I answer; they might be called boly, not upon the account of any merit or righteousness of their own; but 1st, As they were God's Church, educated and trained up in the only Religion upon earth, which deserved the name of a holy Worship. 2dly, As they were in covenant with a holy God, and under his immediate direction and government, whose Laws tended to make men holy in all manner of conversation. 3dly, As they were sprung from the holy Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But this was a relative, not a personal holiness. And in the two first respects, their holiness, whatever it were, was owing to the special grace and favour of God, and communicated to them so, as that they might be flyled holy, without any merit or worthiness which they could call their own.

THEIR being enlightened with the knowledge of the true God, educated in his worship, instructed

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in his laws, were all proper means to make them the best of People. How they had profited under such means, we hear in this chapter. Their behaviour was fuch as merited punishment rather than reward, as every impartial Reader must see, tho' Moses had not faid it. And therefore it was just in him to upbraid them for their unworthiness, and to let them know that they were far from deserving to be masters of the land of Canaan.

BUT perhaps their pedigree, their communion with God, and the kind words and compellations which he often vouchsafed them, might fill them with an opinion, that they had an indefeafible right to the divine Bleffings, and that their heavenly Father, like some weak Parents, conceived a fondness for disobedient children. Some of these conceits must have possest their minds, otherwise Moses, who writ nothing in vain, would never have cautioned them, with fo much earnestness, that he repeats and inculcates it upon them, to take heed, that when they were fettled in Canaan, and eat and drank of the fat of the land, they should not grow proud upon it, and forget God, and carry it with such an air, as if their own worthiness or good fortune had obtained it for them.

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MOSES forewarns them of this vanity, and preaches to them and us, at the same time, a needful doctrine of humility and modesty. Men are extremely fond of facrificing to their own net, and burning incense to their own dragg, as the Prophet speaks; and the worse they are, the more of self-sufficiency they arrogate to themselves. Israel thought, or was in danger of thinking, that the kingdom of Canaan was theirs by virtue of their election in their Ancestors to be. the People of God, without any confideration of

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ple have built their title to a heavenly Canaan, upon no better ground than a strong conceit, that they have been the elect children of God, and that therefore their title to it is ensured by an immutable decree? Multitudes of sinners have supported themselves upon this persuasion, spending the time of their sojourning here agreeably to their carnal lusts and interests; and at the end of their course they have laid down their heads upon the soft and easie pillow of Election, hoping by virtue of their imaginary enrollment amongst the Saints of God, they should find a safe

passage to the port of everlasting felicity.

IT was the modesty of the good old Patriarch Jacob, to acknowledge, when God had greatly multiplied and encreased his substance, that he was not worthy of the least of the divine Mercies. If his posterity had retained the same spirit, and been the true heirs of his picty and virtue, they would not have wanted so many precautions as Moses gave them, to remember God and themselves in the days of their prosperity; to consider how many wonderful Blessings and fignal Deliverances God had vouchsafed them, and how many gross acts of impiety and rebellion they had committed against him. If the humility of old Israel had descended upon the Tribes who were called by his name, we had never heard of fuch passages as these, which their great Legislator has recorded of them. Jesurun waxed fat and kicked; he forgot God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his sal-They provoked him to jealousie with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. This great Prophet fore-

faw,

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faw, for God had revealed it to him, that when the People should be possessed of the promised Land, and enjoyed the abundance of it, they would turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke their Maker, and break his Covenant.

'TAKE therefore, fays he, this book of the Law, and put it in the fide of the Ark of the Covenant, that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck: Behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death? Gather unto me all the Elders of your Tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. For I know that after my death, ye will utterly corrupt your felves, and turn 'aside from the way which I have commanded you: and evil will befall you in the latter days, because 'ye will do evil in the fight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.

WHAT a Farewel was this, may some say, to come out of the mouth of so meek a man as Moses? Nay rather, what a People had he to deal with, whose spirit and temper he perfectly knew by the experience of sorty years, and all that time had been labouring for their welfare with the greatest sincerity and good affection? to how little purpose, he here declares; and the ensuing histories assure us, that he had a true foresight of their suture behaviour; for they acted just as he had soretold of them.

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NOW these men had a righteousness of their own, very different from the righteousness of God. i. e. they were persuaded that their own ways were as right as

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his, and much more easie and agreeable to lead them to their desired ends. When he forbid them to make any graven Image, they said in their hearts, What harm is there in such an Image? When he told them, he would not rain Manna on the Sabbath-day, they said, Why might it not rain on that day as well as on another? When he commanded them to sacrifice, they asked, to what purpose? why might not they do as well without it? When he told them the danger of contracting alliances with the Canaanites; they conceived there was no such danger in it, but rather a necessity for it, if they would reap the advantages of a good neighbourhood; and by this intimacy they might gain many of them over to their own laws and religion.

THESE men were Free-thinkers, which is but another name for humourfome and conceited People, who dispute every thing which is offered by others, and deem every law an imposition, which has not their consent to the making of it. They thought their own will and way as good as another's, and they would follow it, and trust to the success of it. This humour may be intimated by the word Righteousness here in my Text. When these men came to be established in Canaan, they might resect upon their behaviour in the Wilderness, and say to one another in their conversations, 'We disputed with Moses at such and such places, and contested the reason of his

commands and injunctions; and yet notwithstanding his angry speeches and threatnings, we are safely

arrived to the end of our Travels, and are settled

here in peace; so that we are in the right to affert

our liberty.

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THIS is the common plea of all Libertines: they many times prosper in the World, and then they argue from fuch prosperity, that all their doings have been right, and that those who would confine them within the bounds of religion and virtue, feek to usurp authority over them, in order to make their own advantages of them. And others are encouraged by their fuccess, to say and do the same things, and so the World is filled with Libertinism. Moses seems to have apprehended, that his People would use this way of reasoning; and therefore he takes care to prevent the effects of it: 'You shall have your Canaan, but do not mistake the means which bring you to the posfession of it; do not think that your carriage and conduct in the Wilderness hath deserved it. No: the wickedness of the present inhabitants, and the faithfulness of God in his promises to your Ancestors, make you lords of Canaan. As for your felves, your demerits are such as would for ever have ex-'cluded you from it.'

THIS was the righteousness of that Generation; and they transmitted it down to their late descendants the Scribes and Pharisees, who constantly did their own will and pleasure, under colour of doing the will of God. And their colouring confifted in a great oftentation of faying their prayers, giving small alms, in a formal dress and demure Looks, and other petty observances of the Law, while they passed over the substantial duties of it, Justice and Mercy, and the Love of God. With this cheap and partial righteousness they cheated their own souls so far as to believe, that they were the greatest favourites of God, and that it was impossible for them to miss of the Kingdom of Heaven: or if any of them should fall into the place of torments, R 4

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forments, that Abraham himself would come and refcue them out of it, as being his children. Such confidence had they in the merits of a superficial righteousness, or, to call it by its proper name, in a gross

Hypocrifie.

WORTHY heirs of that Generation spoken of in my Text! their righteousness was of a piece, and their rewards corresponded. Both had the enjoyments of an earthly Canaan; but the word of truth shuts them out from that which is above; for it affirms, that except our righteousness exceed theirs, we shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Nor shall the righteousness of Ancestors avail there, as it did in the case before us. For as Ezekiel says of Noah, Daniel, and Job, so may we say of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, They shall deliver neither sons nor daughters by their righteousness in the day of judgment, but they only shall be delivered themselves.

THE righteousness of a stiff-necked People, what is it, but that which seems right in their own eyes? The argument of a strong hand, a sharp scourge, may compel them, and that but sometimes, to go out of their way, and comply with their duty. But remove this, and leave them to their choice, and they certainly follow their own inclinations, without any fear of God or regard of man. If it were possible for such spirits to be admitted into Heaven, they would soon fill it with wild disorder, and make it as miserable as any place upon earth. And therefore happy is it for those that shall enter into it, that a higher degree of righteousness is necessary for it.

TO this degree of righteousness let us all aspire; and let us begin with mortifying that cursed pride which is the bane of it, and shows it self in divers

Thapes,

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shapes, in our fondness of vain delights, in our preferring the doing of our own will above all things, in our deafness to good admonitions, in our conceit of our own wisdom, in our making a scorn and jest of serious things. These wicked affections are all the daughters of pride; which we must divorce and utterly abandon, otherwise we shall never attain to that degree of righteousness which I am recommending. For it is a composition of piety, meekness, and humility, of the love and fear of God, and a resolution to obey his Word. The Pfalmist shews us the foundation of this righteousness, Psal. cxxxi. when he says; Lord, I am not high-minded, I have no proud looks. I do not exercife my felf in great matters, which are too high for me. But I refrain my foul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother: yea my foul is even as a weaned child. The very same ground of it is laid in that Gospel, where our blessed Lord assures us, that every one that will enter into his Kingdom, must become as a little child, divested of self-conceit and selflove, with a mind discharged of those erroneous notions which ill custom and education have infused into it; apt to learn, and obedient to discipline.

LET us hear him, who lays this foundation of Righteousness, and builds the whole superstructure upon it, by destroying that pride which separates between us and our God, by inspiring us with that meekness and humility which prepares our hearts to walk in the straight way and narrow path of life, which disposes us to deny our carnal reasonings and corrupt inclinations, and to hunger and thirst after the knowledge of the divine Will, and prefer the doing of it above all things; and when we have performed

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performed it with our utmost diligence, to call our selves unprofitable servants, and confess that we have done no more than what was our duty to do, and be so sensible of our impersections, as to pray, that when our works come to be tried, and our fate determined in the great Judgment, we may be found cloathed, not with the raggs of our own righteousness, but with the robe of his merits, whom God hath made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. To him, with &c.



SERMON

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SERMON XLV.

On the Sunday after ASCENSION-DAY.

MORNING.

DEUT. xii. 32.

What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish therefrom.



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HEN the Almighty had given Moses directions how to make the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the Altar, and all the Utenfils thereunto belonging, he charges

him to be fure to make all these things according to the patterns of them which were shew'd him in Mount And here in this twelfth of Deuteronomy, when he had instructed him in the Laws of offering Sacrifice, he closes all with the Prohibition of my Text, that he and his People should not add to, nor diminish from any of these Ordinances.

NOW it cannot be doubted but Moses and all Israel were religiously confined by these injunctions to do those things whereto they are annext: they were not at liberty to vary a tittle in matter or form from the Scheme and Plan which was laid before them.

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BUT it has been made a question, and very much disputed, whether such sentences as these do so determine every thing that is to be done in the worship of God, that no rite, ceremony, or circumstance may be added, but such as is warranted by some express Text of Scripture; or whether it be lawful to order some things according to human Prudence, and the discretion of Governors. We will briefly see what may be said on both sides of the Question.

And 1st, IF we take the words of my Text in their primary and most obvious Sense, as a command to us to receive the word of God just as it is, without presuming to make more or less of it, than what we find in the Sacred Writings; this is a Proposition universally true, and no exception may be made from it.

HE that shall add any thing of his own invention to the Sacred Oracles, and endeavour to pass it upon Mankind, as the Word of God, when God never spake nor revealed it to him, incurs the censure of a false Prophet; and he who shall deny the authority of any part of the divine Word, and endeavour to suppress it and cancel it, justly merits the name of an infidel and apostate. To draw this matter out into a greater length, and fet it in a fuller light; we fay that it is a breach of the injunction of my Text, for any man to substitute any thing in the room of that which God has prescribed in his Worship, when the Prescription is express and clear. For example: Nadab and Abibu the Priests, the Sons of Aaron, took common fire in their Censers to burn incense before the Lord, which is therefore called frange fire, Lev. x. because by the Law it should have been taken from the Fire of the Altar, which was at first miraculously kindled from Heaven, and thenceforth kept continual-

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ly burning for Sacred Uses. Now though common Fire burnt the Incense as effectually as the other, yet because it was contrary to God's express Prescription, the offending Priests perished in the very act of sacri-

ficing.

Again, IT was an express ordinance of God in the gathering of Manna, Exod. xvi. that no Man should gather more of it at a time, than would serve himself and his Family for a Day; and if any of it were left till next Morning, it bred Worms, and grew very offensive; but on the sixth Day every Man gathered a double quantity, that he might have nothing to do but to rest on the Sabbath Day; and then it continued as savoury and good as it was at first, because it was according to God's Will, who commanded the seventh day to be thus sanctified.

Farther, THE changes which Jeroboam made as to the Place and Seasons of religious Assemblies, and the Persons that were to minister about holy Things, were imputed to him as grievous Sins, because they were all determined otherwise by the express Word

of God.

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are bound to take heed, that we do not interpret any part of God's Word to such a Sense as he never intended by it: for by so doing we shall abuse his Authority, and assume it to our selves, to give credit to our own Designs and Opinions. This our Lord condemned in the *Pharisees*, that they had quite perverted the Word of God, and made it of none effect by their Traditions. And this is the Missortune of all People who are imposed upon by any false Doctrine, that they are defrauded of so much of the genuine word and will of God, as is misconstrued to them,

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and so in effect are sent away with a Stone instead of Bread, and instead of a Fish a Scorpion.

adly, THESE words lay a restraint upon us, not to pretend that any thing is a divine command, which really is not fo; for besides the great Sin of such Falfification, the consequences of it may be very destru-Etive to Mankind. The Prophets complain of some in their Days, who preached peace in the name of the Lord, when God had a controversie with his People; and prophefied smooth things to wicked Men, and represented their condition as safe and secure, when the fire of God's Indignation was breaking out upon them. Likewise that there were Judges in their Days, who inverted the names of things, calling evil good, and good evil, and in consequence of such wicked Doctrines they condemned the Innocent, and acquitted the Guilty. The like abuses our Saviour charges upon the Jewish Doctors of his Time, that they held the Sayings of their Rabbies, which he calls the Precepts of Men, to be of equal, and in some cases of superior Authority to the Commandments of God; as in that instance of the fifth Commandment, where they taught that the putting their Money into the Treasury, which was but a human Institution, acquitted them from relieving poor Parents, which is part of the honour due to them by the divine Law. And they were more concerned to pay the Tythes of the fmallest Herbs, and to observe the forms of washing themselves and their Vessels, than to perform the weightier Duties of the Law, to cleanse their Hearts, and keep their Consciences pure from sinful Pollutions.

THIS was a very low and wretched state to which these Men had reduced the Laws of their Religion;

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ligion; and they had brought them to this pass by putting false glosses and forced interpretations upon them, till they had made them the Laws of Men. not of God, and met with a reward worthy of fuch Doctrines and such Observances; for when they were grown to the highest opinion of their own righteousness, and fancied themselves so sound, that they needed no Physician, and despised all our Saviour's Reproofs and Calls to Repentance, they suddenly fell into the Hands of an angry God, and found him a confuming Fire, in the destruction of their polluted City and Temple. Which may convince us how provoking it is to God, and how fatal it may prove to our felves, if we pervert and wrest his holy Word. so as to make it speak our own corrupt Sense, and comply with our own finful Lusts and Affections.

THUS far then my Text is a general and facred Rule to us all, that we receive the Word of God as it is, and interpret it according to its genuine sense and meaning, and study to maintain the truth and integrity of it, that it may be to us, as it is designed, an everlasting sountain of holiness and purity of living. In this respect the Law of God is perfect, and Men must not presume to impair the perfection of it,

by adding to it, or diminishing from it.

BUT now, when this word prescribes the time and place, and other circumstances of God's Worship, we may, nay we must understand it to be binding so far only as it is practicable. Thus the Jews were bound to observe the Laws contained in this same twelfth Chapter of Deuteronomy. They might not eat within the Gates of their private Houses, or in any other places where they should see fit, the Tythe of their Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, nor the firstlings

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firstlings of their Flocks and Herds, nor any of their Vows, freewill Offerings, or heave Offerings; but were obliged to bring them all to Jerusalem, and offer them upon that one Altar of the Temple, which God had erected for all the Families of Israel. And this was a Law which was to be punctually obeyed, so long as it was practicable. And even those Jews who were dispersed abroad, far from the Land of Judea, and religious Proselytes of other Nations and Languages, who had joyn'd themselves in the worship of the God of Israel, came up to Jerusalem at certain times of the Year, especially at the Passover and at Pentecost, in obedience to this Law.

BUT then this Law was not binding to them, when Jerusalem was in the Hands of the Heathen, who were enemies to their Religion, as sometimes it happened to be; much less when it was demolished and laid in Ruins, as it has been twice, by the Chaldeans and Romans. In such circumstances this Law is impracticable, and no Jew pretends to go thither to observe it. As they told the Emperor Julian, when he askt some of them, why they did not offer their Sacrifices; Because, said they, that Temple is de-

froyed, where alone we could offer them according

to our Law; and therefore in our present circum-

ftances we look upon our felves to be wholly dif-

charged from that Service.'

2dly, THIS Law against adding or altering in matters of religious Observance, was not understood by the Jews themselves to restrain them in every thing, but only in such Matters whereto it was annext, and as the nature of things required. And therefore they held it agreeable to Piety, and the Will of God, to add certain Fasts and Festivals to their

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their Temple-Service, which were not prescribed by the Law of Moses. Particularly they kept the anniversary Feast of the Dedication of their second Temple, and in celebrating their Passover they changed several ancient Usages; for instead of eating, according to Exod. xii. II. with their loins girt, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, like Men in hafte, in memory of their hafty departure out of Egypt, they eat it in our Saviour's Time lying on Couches, habited and composed as at other Meals. And from our Lord's compliance with that way we conclude, that they finned not in receding from the first Institution.

THEY were certainly more commendable in relaxing inconvenient usages of an indifferent Nature, than in overstraining the Law to their own and others detriment, as they did sometimes, particularly in the case of the Sabbath; where because the Commandment forbids any manner of Work to be done on the seventh Day, they extended the prohibition even to works of the greatest Charity and Mercy. Upon which account we often find them quarrelling with our Saviour as a Sabbath-breaker, because he healed people on this Day. But how pertinently does he retort their Argument upon them, by telling them, 'You feed your Cattle, and lead them to Water; and 'if any of them fall into a Pit, you take pains to lift 'them out on this Day. And if you can dispense with doing this for your Beasts, how much more precious is the life of Man? Therefore it is lawful ' to heal on the Sabbath-day.'

THIS was fuch a clear way of reasoning, as might enlighten any mind that had common sense left in it. But these Men were so blinded with filly Superstition, that

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that fometimes they would not stir in the necessary defence of their own Lives, if they were assaulted on the Sabbath-day. Thus we read, I Maccab. ii. that when Antiochus Epiphanes King of Syria was at War with them, and besieged one thousand of them in a strong hold, he made no assault upon them till the next Sabbath, when he took them all without resistance. Which their Brethren hearing of, and considering that if they should follow the same Example, they might all be destroyed in the same manner, debated this case among themselves, and resolved that in such dangerous exigences the Law of the Sabbath did not bind them, but that they might sight on that Day in desence of their Lives, when they were forced to it.

YET this did not cure their malady of Superstition so effectually, but that in great measure it returned again. For many years after this, when Pompey the Roman General had taken Jerusalem, and laid siege to the Temple, whither many of the Jews were retired, as being a place of the greatest strength; though these Fews vigorously defended themselves on the Sabbath, when they were actually affaulted, according to the aforesaid resolution of their Ancestors; yet they would not stir a hand to obstruct their Enemies Approaches, or ruin their Engines, as they did upon working Days. Which Pompey perceiving, ordered that no attacks should be made on their Sabbaths, but took these opportunities to fill up the Ditches, and plant his batteries round the Temple; and thus carrying on his Works without opposition, in a short time he became Master of the Place. Which might have held out much longer, and perhaps have forced him to raise the Siege, had it not been for the super**stitious**

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stitious rigour with which the Jews observed their Sabbath.

I have no design, by these remarks, to abate in any Man that exact Reverence which he ought to have for the divine Laws. It is too visible how prone people are to grow licentious, to throw off restraints, and run into a contempt of God's Word and Commandments. Most of the crying Sins of our own as well as other Nations, spring from this bitter root of Profaneness. And those Men grow most corrupt and abominable in their doings, who harden themselves against the fear of God, and believe little or nothing of his Word, and make no conscience of absenting themselves from his Worship. But then on the other hand, Superstition is almost as destructive of the solid and substantial duties of Religion, because it encourages Men to rest in certain trifling, infignificant obfervances, whereby they hope to fatisfie God, and to compound for many favourite Lusts which they cherish in their Hearts, and for the omission of many weightier Matters. To fay nothing of the clogg and dead weight with which useless observances encumber Religion, and thereby discourage those who would be otherwise very willing to perform all the material parts of it.

NOW to purge out and prevent both these extremes of true Piety, there is not a better method than the rule of my Text, that we take care neither to enlarge nor diminish the Word of God; as we are not to neglect any thing which he has injoyned us, so we are not to pretend that he has forbidden any thing which either in express Words, or by rational deduction and inference, we do not find prohibited in Sacred Writ; for this would be to add to the

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number of negative Precepts, and consequently to break the rule here before us. For those who teach that God is displeased at those things against which he has no way declared his Displeasure, are as much guilty of adding to his Word, as those who urge his Authority for the doing of any thing which he has no way commanded.

WE are farther to consider, as I noted before, how far such restraining Precepts, as the words of my Text, are to be extended. And we shall easily see, that these words little concern either Jews or Gentiles at this Day; for they being an injunction to the former to offer all their Sacrifices, Tythes, and Vows at the Temple of Jerusalem, since that Temple is long since destroyed, the command is become impracticable in the affirmative part of it, and only holds good in the negative, that since these Sacrifices cannot be offered at Jerusalem, they shall be offered no where else; and so indeed they have been always understood.

this will, in a great measure, answer the objection which Maimonides and other Jewish Writers bring against our Christian Institution. For whereas our Saviour professes that he came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to sulfill them, these Objectors blaspheme him as not acting sincerely and according to this Profession; for, say they, he has changed, and altered, and destroyed our Law by his own Institution. But this will appear to be an unjust Accusation. For our Lord himself, as to his own Person and Conversation while here upon Earth, was in all things exactly conformable to the Law of Moses: And his Disciples, after his Ascension, frequented the service of the Temple, as we learn from the

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the History of their Acts; and so they and their sellow Citizens that were Converts continued to do, till it was destroyed, and then their Government was of course dissolved, and all the Laws which concerned them as a peculiar Church and Nation, sunk to-

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INDEED the Apostles some years before this dissolution, determined in a Council, which they held about this Question, that the Mosaick Law of Ordinances should not be imposed upon their Gentile Converts; and this determination was very just: For such ordinances were not intended for any but Jews, to distinguish them from all others, and keep them a peculiar People; and for such of other Nations as thought fit to incorporate and become one with them. Though many pious Gentiles were permitted to dwell among them, upon their professing to worship one God, the God of Israel, and engaging to observe the seven Precepts given to Noab. And upon these Terms they were admitted to some share of the Temple Worship, in an outer Court allotted them for that purpose.

BUT when the Jews Government was dissolved, the publick profession of their Religion was so far from being convenient for all the World, that it became impracticable to themselves, as I have shown, and they will not deny: And though in their present dispersion they keep up several badges of distinction from all other People, yet I know of no authority they have from the Law or the Prophets to do so; if there be any thing of God in it, it is to perpetuate them as a monument of his displeasure and ven-

geance throughout all Generations.

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WE do not forget the Words of Christ, Matth. v. 18. where he fays, 'till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or tittle shall not pass from the Law, 'till all be fulfilled. The meaning of which must be this, that sooner may Heaven and Earth pass away, than God fail of accomplishing all things typified by the Law, or foretold by the Prophets: or he must mean the Decalogue, the Law of Holiness, Goodness and Truth, which is of everlasting obligation to all Men, and which he presently begins to explain. But that the ceremonial or civil Law of the Jews should always continue in force, he could not mean, 1. Because he foretold the destruction of the Temple, on which depended the exercise of the ritual Law; and assured the Woman of Samaria, that the time was coming when the Worship of God should be confined neither to Jerusalem nor Samaria, but that Men should worship him every where in a more spiritual manner. 2. Because the continuance of this Law is inconsistent with many ancient Prophecies, which speak of the abolishing of such Sacrifices, and of a new Covenant upon quite different terms, which God would make, not with Israel only, but with all Mankind. cause he knew that he himself was the summ and substance of the Law, of whom it was said in the fortieth Pfalm, Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; Burnt-offering and Sin-offering haft thou not required. Then faid I, Lo I come to do thy will, O God. Isaiab very expressly and fully, chap. liii. That God made Christ's Soul, or Life, an offering for our sins, and laid on him the iniquity of us all. This Law therefore Christ has fulfilled, by accomplishing all things that were prefignified by it, and it did not pass away, it did

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did not fail from being a Law of the Jewish Government, 'till it had been thus fulfilled. Upon a view of both the Laws, delivered by Moses and Christ, we cannot but observe, That the former abounds in outward and sensible Ordinances, the latter in the precepts of inward and spiritual Holiness: In the former the Discipline and Ceremonies of Divine Worship are more particularly described; in the latter most of this is lest to be devised and settled by the Apostles, Bishops and Governors of Christian Churches.

AND fo I answer the Question which I proposed in the beginning of this Discourse, Whether such Sentences as this of my Text do fo determine every thing that is to be done in the Worship of God, that no Rite, Ceremony or Circumstance may be added, but such as is warranted by some express Text of Scripture; or whether it be lawful to order some things according to human Prudence. From the best light of Scripture it appears to us, that the Discipline and Usages of the Jewish Church were for the most part prescribed in the written Law of Moses. and the People generally adhered to them throughout all Generations: Where the prescribed Forms were enforced by fuch injunctions as the words of my Text, there the People were very punctual Observers of every part of them: But where they were not tied up by fuch restraints, there they took the liberty to vary from some usages even of the Mosaick institution, as I have noted in the celebration of the Passover, and might have shown in some other cases.

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AS for the Manner and Form of our Christian Worship, we must not expect to hear much of it in the Gospel, as to any external rite or deportment of the Worshippers. For indeed there was then no Christian Church in being, separate and distinct from that of the Jews. The Temple and the Synagogues were theirs, which Christ and his Apostles frequented for their publick Worship. And though in a few years after Christ, there were several Churches of the Gentiles, mentioned partly in the Acts, and partly in St. Paul's Epistles, yet in none of them have we any complete Scheme of Church-service exhibited to us: Nor does it appear that the Sacred Writers ever had fuch a Scheme in view, but left it to the care and conduct of particular Governors to make such provision for their People as should be most for their Edification, recommending it to all to take care that a due decorum and good order might be preserved in all things.

I shall conclude all with the words of the Son of Sirach, because they acquaint us with the opinion of ancient pious Israelites, though no Prophets, how well they agreed with our Christian Doctrines, in preferring the Precepts of the Decalogue, before those of the ceremonial Law; Ecclesiasticus xxxv. I, &c. He that keepeth the [moral] Law, bringeth offerings enough; he that taketh heed to the Commandment [of loving God and Man] offereth a peace offering. He that requiteth a good turn, offereth fine flower; and he that giveth almes, sacrificeth praise. To depart from wickedness, is a thing pleasing to the Lord; and to forsake unrighteousness is a

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MAY we all pay a reverent and awful regard to that Gospel of Christ which abounds in such refined Doctrines; which he assures us are spirit and life; that by them we may finally be transformed into his Image, and ever live with him, who liveth with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God World without end.





SERMON XLVI.

On the Sunday after ASCENSION-DAY.

EVENING.

D E U T. xiii. 1, 2, 3.

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder: And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them: Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.



OD having enacted a body of Laws for the government of his People, like a wife Legislator he takes care in the next place to enforce the observance of them, by declaring what punishments should be in-

flicted on those who offended against them.

AND first of all, he declares it to be death for any one to offer to seduce his People to the worship of strange gods. Let such Seducer's character be ne-

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ver so great, he was to die without mercy; and even by the hands of his nearest relations and dearest friends. No bonds of nature, marriage, or friendship were to be pleaded as a sufficient reason for sparing him, but every man's hand was to be lifted up against him to

put him to death.

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NO W suppose this Seducer has for a long time maintained the character of a holy Prophet, a man of a divine Spirit, to whom God has communicated his Will by supernatural dreams and visions. Suppose he has prophesied of what should happen in the World, and his predictions have really come to pass: Suppose he has done every thing that seems possible for the greatest Prophet to do; yet if at last he abuses his gifts, abilities, and reputation to missead men to a false religion, to the worship of Images, or any creatures in heaven or earth, his prophetick character shall not give credit to such doctrine; let him say and do as great things as he will, yet while he teaches rebellion against the one true God, he is a Deceiver, and shall surely be put to death.

HOW far the World of Spirits, or the Prophets of a false Religion may work miracles, and foretell things to come, is a great question. That they may have these powers in some degree and measure, is here supposed; and that in fact they have exercised them at some times, must be confest, except we will deny the truth of all history. Pharaoh's Magicians imitated some of the miracles of Moses, tho' in a much inferior degree. They turned their rods into serpents, but his quickly destroyed them and swallowed them all up. The witch of Endor brought up such a shape as appeared to King Saul to be the true Samuel.

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IN the new Testament we have a caveat given us by our Lord to beware of false Christs and false. Prophets, which should shew such signs and wonders, as would deceive even the elect children of God, if it were possible for them to be deceived, i. e. if they were not secured from it by the special care and savour of God. In St. Paul's 2 Thess. ii. 9. he apprizes us of the coming of a great Antichrist into the World, the same which St. John saw, Rev. xiii. whose appearance was with great power, and signs, and lying wonders; causing fire to come down from Heaven upon the Earth in the sight of men, and giving life to the dead image of the beast, so that it spake, and made the spectators to admire and adore it.

SUCH Antichrists have appeared in divers ages and parts of the World. Simon Magus may be reckoned as the first of them; who so bewitched the People of Samaria with his Sorceries, that they accounted him fomething more than a man, and called him the great Power of God. And tho' the particular things which he did, are not mentioned, yet we must suppose them to have been very extraordinary and aftonishing, otherwise the Samaritans, from the least to the greatest, would never have crowded about him, as we read they did, Acts viii. Not long after him lived Apollonius, born at Tyana a city of Cappadocia, a professed Idolater, and yet reported by Philostratus the writer of his life, to have foretold many events which afterwards came to pass, and to have done many miraculous works. And indeed the histories of antient and modern Idolaters are full of narratives to the same purpose.

THE reason is, because evil Spirits are very predominant in heathen Countries, and enable Magici-

ans, and other their votaries, to know and do many things which are above the power and ordinary course of nature, and yet are far from being arguments of any omniscience or omnipotence in the authors of them. For they are all finite Beings, and cannot exceed those bounds which the supreme Lord of all has assigned them. But fince he permits them to tyrannize over those People whom they have debauched by their wicked temptations, it is no wonder that they can acquaint a man who converses familiarly with them, of any thing that is doing, or was very lately done in a place so remote, that no human means could bring the tydings of it in so short a time. No wonder, if when they are permitted and authorized by God to bring calamities upon finful men, they are able to foretell what fort of calamities they shall be, and at what time inflicted. But yet they have often wanted either the power or the will to give men a true forefight and warning of their fate; for that might have put the sufferers in a way to have prevented their own ruin, which was contrary to the will and design of these wicked instruments. They might have foretold Abab that he should fall at Ramoth-Gilead; for this was revealed to them; but they were lying Spirits in the mouths of his Prophets, and told him a contrary story, how he should prevail against the Syrians, that they might animate him to go to his own destruction. They foretold how Julius Cafar should be assassinated upon the Ides of March; which was impossible for them to be ignorant of; for the plot had been concerting long before it was executed, and they who are in with all mischievous designs, knew as much of it as any of the Conspirators. But then they had formerly given out a contrary prediction, that this same Casar should

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should die in his bed, in a good old age: So that while they fought to get credit by telling the truth, they secured the issue of their plot by a lye; for Cafar depended upon the first prediction, and so neglected the second.

mans and Grecians, for one that was afflicted with a lingering illness, to go and sleep in the Temple of Esculapius, their imaginary god of physick, expecting to have a cure revealed to him in a dream. And there are attestations upon record, that some patients had their expectations answered. Tho' if we may believe Arnobius a christian writer, they were generally disappointed; for, says he, where one or two were cured, thousands received no help, but rather grew work upon it. However, if they had been cured for the most part, no more could have been concluded from it, but this, that the Spirit whom they invocated by the name of Esculapius, had the skill of an expert Physician; which that it is very possible, none will deny.

BUT, as learned men have collected from history, these Spirits could not foretell suture events which depended upon the will of free agents, and were not lest by Providence to the direction and management of such Spirits. Concerning the knowledge of such Events God challenges them by the Prophet Isaiah xli.

22. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods. This knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for any creature to attain to. If the oracles of the Heathen have sometimes hit upon such future contingencies, it has been but a lucky chance, or by such conjectures as a wise man might make, comparing causes with their effects, and concluding

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cluding what may happen again, from what has for-

merly happened.

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HOW much they were in the dark as to these things, appears from the uncertainty of their answers, which they delivered in ambiguous terms, on purpose to leave it to the enquirers to take that sense which should be most agreeable to the success of their affairs. They owned there was a Fate above them which over-ruled them: which was as much as to say, they did not know the will and pleasure of the most high God; and was in effect an acknowledgment, that he frustrateth the tokens of the lyars, and maketh diviners mad; he turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish, Isa. xliv. 25.

THUS much I have faid to shew wherein the great strength of false prophets lies; that by the affistance of evil Spirits they may foretell some things, and perform some strange and wonderful works, which cannot be done by any natural means. And tho' there be nothing of the finger of God in such things, and sharp-fighted men may see thro' them; yet because they may impose upon plain, honest, well-meaning People, the goodness of God has given these people another way, and a very fure one, whereby to judge of fuch Prophets, and to fatisfie themselves that they come not from him: and that is, by weighing and examining their doctrine. If they teach a doctrine which is subversive of any part of the moral Law, if they encourage men to do any thing which is injurious to the honour and glory of God, if they fet up any Idol for men to worship, whether it be visible or invisible, the work of the hand, or the imagination of the heart; fuch teachers and guides are false Prophets: no matter how grave their carriage, how fe-

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rious their looks, how manifold their gifts, how eminent their parts and abilities are; if they advance a law which is contary to the Law of God, they are his enemies, and do what they can to depose him from his government of the World.

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AND the readiest way to find them out, is to examine their doctrines by the rule of God's Word, This Moses and the Prophets make the standard and touchstone of all doctrines. To the law and to the testimony, fays Isaiab, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light nor truth in them. This rule may be easily learned by all People. The ten Commandments are so short and plain, that they neither burden the memory, nor perplex the understanding. They require nothing but an honest heart to apply them to practice in all religious and civil cases. How plainly do the two first shew us the unlawfulness of Polytheism and Idolatry, and secure us against the peril of those temptations which may be offered us by such Seducers as are noted in my Text? If they lead you into the practice of idolatry, never regard all the protestations they shall make of their intentions to be pious and right in their worship of the Deity. Their practice is so contrary to the word and will of God, that the most subtile reasonings of men will never be able to reconcile them. And therefore those who own the divine authority of this Word, and will notwithstanding set up graven Images in their places of worship, show some kind of modesty in leaving out of their Catechisms that Commandment which forbids them: it being such a glaring contradiction to their practice, that it is not fit to be inculcated on the minds of those People, who are bred up in the daily breach of it. BUT

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BUT the' this practice is contrary to the Commandment, yet it is said to be authorized by many signs and wonders, about which several volumes have been written; but where is the necessity of them? A word to the wife. Tho' many impostures have passed for miracles in the defence of image worship, yet we will not scruple to grant that some facts have really been what they were said to be. I think we are fully warranted both by Moses and by Christ, to allow that such wonders may be wrought, and yet utterly to reicht the doctrine which they are brought to confirm. If that doctrine be plainly contrary to any part of the revealed Will of God, the cause of it is deplorable, notwithstanding such evidences; it is condemned by the words of my Text, which command us to adhere to the Law of God's own declaration, to be sure that he cannot deny or contradict himself, to obey him rather than man, to have more veneration for the Law published at mount Horeb, than for the opposite doctrines of any meer man, how considerable soever, tho' he had the reputation of a Prophet, or person favoured with divine Revelations, and could produce even miraculous credentials to give authority to the doctrine he taught.

I will not dissemble the objection of the Jews, who urge this very Text against our blessed Lord, and justifie themselves by it for putting him to death. I doubt not but their ancestors had an eye to it, when they alledged at his tryal before Pilate, that they had a law, by which he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. But this was begging the question, as we call it, and taking that for granted, which they should have proved. They suppose by this insinuation, that he was not the Son of God; but what if

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he was, in that transcendent sense which he afferts, and which his followers have all along proved from the ancient Scriptures, that he must needs be? then all their accusation falls to the ground. What if he was that Prophet spoken of by Moses, Deut. xviii. which he fays the Lord their God would raise up to them to be a Legislator like to himself? then he could not be that Prophet which he speaks of here in my Text. For Moses expresly distinguishes them, that we may be fure not to confound them. To the prophet which God will raise up, says he, thou shalt hearken; but to the prophet spoken of in my Text, he fays, thou shalt not hearken. God's Prophet was to be agreeable to the desires of the People, which they expressed at hearing the law from Horeb. Ob, said they, this great fire will consume us. Let us not bear the voice of God speaking out of the fire: but speak thou to us all that the Lord our God shall speak to thee; and we will hear it, and do it. God was pleased with this Address, and answered graciously, 'tis well spoken, They shall have a Prophet like Moses; and I will f put my words into his mouth, and he shall speak 6 all that I command him. And whoever hearkens onot to my words which he shall speak in my name, · I will require it of him. But the Prophet which fhall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak; or that shall fpeak in the name of other gods, even that Prophet fhall die. And if thou fay in thy heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a Prophet speaks in the name of the 6 Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, ' that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the Prophet hath spoken it presumptuously.' HERE

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HERE we have the characters of a true and false Prophet opposed to each other. In which we may observe, that to make a true Prophet two things are required. 1st, That he speak in the name of the Lord. 2dly, That his sayings come to pass. For if his saying or prediction should be fulfilled, and he spake not in the name of the Lord: or if he spake in his name, but could not prove his Mission by proper sacts, he

was not to be received for a true Prophet.

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BUT now both these parts of the true Prophet's character are easily proved to have met in our Lord. For ist, He spake in the name of the God of Israel with eminent zeal and constancy, teaching and pressing his hearers to love this God in the first place with all the heart and soul and strength and mind, and assuring them that he came not to destroy one tittle of what was written in the Law and the Prophets, but to sulfill every thing. And he made it his business to purge the temple, reform the religion, magnishe the honour and glory of this God, to make his name known in all the World: to turn the Gentiles from their darkness to his light, and from their errors and delusions to his truth.

whether they were authoritative, or prophetick. Whatever he commanded to be done, whether it were to tast out evil spirits, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to still the winds, to multiply food for hungry multitudes, the effect presently sollowed upon his speaking the word. And whatever he foretold of himself, of his Disciples, of the destruction of Jerusalem; of the propagation of his Gospel, all his predictions were accomplished in the time and manner as he had pre-

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fignified.

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fignified. So that our Lord had all the marks and

credentials of a true Prophet.

BUT still the great stumbling-block of the Jews and other adversaries of Christianity is this: That our Saviour taught his Apostles to baptize and admit disciples into his Religion, by a profession of Faith in three persons of the Godhead, which was a doctrine not known before his time, and feems contrary to the writings of Moses and the Prophets. Now how far this doctrine was unknown to men before our christian Revelation, I cannot take upon me to determine. Some think it was known to feveral eminent Saints and Servants of God. This is certain, that Christ and his followers ground it upon feveral passages of the old Testament, which cannot come properly before us at this time. I need urge no more at present, but that passage which I quoted out of Deut. xviii. and argue from it, that if Christ was the great Prophet there promised, as we Christians have always infifted, and our opponents have never disproved, then we are bound by a command which God lays upon us in that very place, to hearken to him in every thing, and to receive all his words as the dictates and revelation of God. Then we can be in no danger of being mif-led by him in any thing that relates to the divine Nature and Worship. Nay we are assured by feveral ancient Scriptures, that this great Prophet should make farther discoveries of the divine Nature, Word, and Will, than had ever been made to mankind before. This office of the Messiah was acknowledged by that generation wherein he appeared. For we hear them call him that great Prophet which should come into the World, and they fay, When Christ cometh, he will teach us all things; which faying intimates, that they

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they expected from him new revelations of God and heavenly things. And indeed he could not have resembled Moses in his prophetick office, without such an intimate communion as he had with the divine Majesty, and without mediating, as he did, a new Covenant betwixt God and men, according to the most received and most natural interpretation of this Promise. What need many words? If we can say our Creed with fincerity; if we believe Christ to be the Son of God, after such a manner as that he is of the same substance: if we believe his passion, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven, as we there confess, we can have no dispute about the truth of any of his Doctrines, fince he who is the teacher is God of God, and came from the bosom of his Father to make him known unto men.

THUS we have considered the rules which Moses gives us to distinguish between true and false Prophets: and when we are acquainted with the rules, we may readily see the the men who walk agreeably or contrary to them. And we may safely judge of them, whether they fear God or not. For our rules are the word of infallible truth: and our great master, who warns us against censuring and judging of others rashly, yet tells us, we may be sure to know salse prophets by what they say, and what they do. Tho' they appear in sheeps cloathing, and carry a fair plausible outside, yet we may discover that which is within, by their doctrines and their works.

HOW much it concerns us to be zealous for the honour of God, and the glory of his name, and to guard against corruptions in religion, especially against those gross violations of it, atheism and idolatry, we are abundantly instructed in this chapter whence my

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Text is taken: where we find the divine Law ordained, that those who taught rebellion against God, should be put to death without mercy, even by the hands of their nearest neighbours, friends, and relations. And if a city were infected with idolatry, and the inhabitants let it pass without punishment; then the publick forces were to be sent against it, to destroy every thing that had breath, both man and beast, with the edge of the sword. And they were to gather all the spoil of it, into a heap in the street, and burn it together with the city, and take order that it should lie in ruins as a perpetual monument of Impiety, and never be rebuilt again.

NOW if any man think this was too severe, let him consider what executions are commonly done upon people for the preservation of temporal Governments, and how many lives are sacrificed to put a stop to a rising sedition or rebellion, or any crime which is inconsistent with the publick welfare; and all agreeable to those rules of good policy, which teach that it is best to suppress evil in the beginning, to stop any infectious distemper before it spread, to cut off a rotten member in order to save the whole body.

THESE severities are often put in practice, as absolutely necessary to preserve our natural life and good estate in many cases: and why may not the like methods be used to cure our spiritual evils? Is the soul of man the only part of him which deserves no care? Is the divine Majesty the only Being who deserves no honour and reverence? When I look upon this xiiith of Deuteronomy, and other sacred oracles, where the wrath of God is revealed, and the penalty of death denounced against atheism, idolatry, and blasphemy, I cannot help thinking that those who are for letting such

Sunday after ASCENSION-DAY.

fuch fins pass without due and timely correction, are not found in their belief of the divine providence, the immortality of the foul, the last judgment, and the rewards and punishments consequent upon it, as revealed in Scripture. I am fure they are far short of that zeal for God's glory which is here recommended; and tho' they may not be affociates with other men in these sins, yet they will be partners with them in their punishments, for want of expressing a zeal against them, and using their endeavours to restrain them. For God has two ways of correcting these sins. First he leaves it to men, as in this chapter, to vindicate the honour of his Laws; which if they neglect to do, then he arifes and vifits them with his own immediate Judg-

SOME perhaps may think, that atheism, idolatry, and blasphemy, are not so heinous and provoking to God under the Gospel, as they were under the Law. But this thought can arise from nothing but lukewarmness and indifferency in the cause of religion. St. Paul teaches us a quite contrary doctrine, Heb. x. 28. He that despised Moses's law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much forer punishment, Suppose ye, shall be be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and bath counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unboly thing, and hath done despight to the Spirit of grace? If we would rightly compute our own interests, we should find that piety towards God is the best security even of our prefent welfare. For where his name is most honoured, and his word regarded, there he chiefly delights to dwell, and to dispense the bleffings of his favour and loving-kindness. There men make conscience of their focial duties, and are most obedient to their governours

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nours, most upright in their dealings, most beneficent and well-affected one towards another. On the other hand, every atheistical liver, and especially every lewd, prophane, cursing and swearing tongue, brings a blemish and contempt upon religion, turns the Author of our blessings into an angry Judge, and drives away that good Spirit which alone can inspire our hearts with the fore-mentioned graces and virtues.

TO conclude then: Let us hearken to the voice of the Lord our God, to keep all his Commandments, and to do that which is right in his eyes, that he may turn away from the fierceness of his anger, and shew us mercy, and have compassion on us, and bless us and our children both in this life and that which is to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom &c.





SERMON XLVII.

On WHITSUNDAY.

MORNING.

DEUT. xvi. 10.

And thou shalt keep the Feast of Weeks unto the Lord thy God, with a tribute of a free-will offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God, according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee.



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T the fixteenth verse of this chapter there is an injunction laid upon the Israelites, that all their males should appear three times a year before the Lord, in the place which he should chuse, which was Feru-

falem; at three solemn Feasts, viz. at the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The reason of these meetings was, that all the People might be united and held together in one Government of Church and State, and might be excited to believe in God, and to sear and love him, by commemorating the great things which he had done for their sore-fathers.

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THE Feast of Weeks was instituted in memory of the Law, which God gave them from Mount Sinai.and which was revealed to them at the end of seven weeks lafter their Passover, or deliverance out of the Land of Egypt. And therefore it is called by the name of Pentecost, a Greek word, which signifies the fiftieth day, as happening just fifty days inclusively after the second day of the Passover. Upon this second day of the Passover their Barley Harvest began; And they offered up the first Fruits to God, in acknowledgment of his right to the whole Harvest, as being the Author and Giver of it. This Wave-sheaf, as they called it, was offered up at the Passover, which is our Easter. But the Feast of Pentecost was kept at the end of their Barley Harvest, when this Corn was reaped and gathered into the Barn. And the Oblations which they made at this Festival, were two Cakes of leavened Bread made of the Corn of that Year; with these Cakes were also offered seven Lambs, one Bullock, and two Rams for a Burnt-Offering; a Kid for a Sin-Offering, and two Lambs for a Peace-Offering. Lev. xxiii. 18.

BESIDES these stated Sacrifices and Oblations, at this Feast of Pentecost they paid their Tythes of as much Corn as they had thresht out at that time; and gave moreover a Tribute, as it is here called, of a free-will Offering of their hand. Neither the matter nor quantity of this Tribute is defined, but lest to every man's Piety to give as he saw reason. However, thus far God has directed, that every man should give in proportion to his Estate. Every man, says he, shall give as he is able, according to the Blessing wherewith God hath Blessed him. And very proper it was to offer such grateful acknowledgments

upon these occasions. All three Festivals were kept at such Seasons of the Year, as naturally led mens minds to this gratitude. The Passover being at the beginning of Barley-Harvest; Pentecost at the beginning of Wheat-Harvest, and the Feast of Tabernacles when they had gathered in all the Fruits of the Earth.

chiefly designed to keep up the memory of the Law, which was delivered at Mount Sinai sisty days after the Israelites came out of Egypt. Several ways were appointed to inculcate this Law upon the minds of the People. Masters of Families were bound to write the most material parts of it in several places of their Houses, and to teach it to their Children morning and evening, and upon several other occasions. But at this Festival, when the Heads of Families were assembled at Jerusalem from all parts of the Nation, the whole of it was to be pronounced to them by the Priest, as from the mouth of God, to make the more awful impression upon their minds.

AT this Solemnity the devouter fort expected, and that upon the ground of many Revelations and Promises, a more than ordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit of God. The Prophets abound in their visions and contemplations of this Divine Grace. And the nearer the days of the Messiah did approach, the more clearly did they apprehend the completion of it.

ACCORDINGLY the Prophet Joel tells them, that the time was coming when God would pour out his Spirit upon all Flesh. And Jeremiah chap. xxxi. points at the day when God would make a new Covenant with his People, and that they should

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be all taught of God; and Isaiah chap, xi. says, that the Earth should be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.

THE accomplishment of these promises they referred to the days of the Messiah, who they believed should come from God to teach them, and be endued with a greater measure of his Spirit than ever was known before. And when he was come, all that believed on him, faw that these promises were verified in him. John the Baptist testified, that he saw the Spirit of God descend on him, that the Gifts and Graces of it were without measure in him, and that he baptized with the Holy Ghost. When he entred upon his Ministry, the first Lesson which he read in the Synagogue of Nazareth, was that of Isaiah lxi. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, &c. and the application which he made of it was to himself in these words, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your Ears. With respect to this fullness of Grace it was, that he declared Blaspheming or speaking against the Holiness of his Spirit to be an inpardonable Sin. this Holiness he appeals for the truth of his Mission, that he came from God.

BY the operation of this Spirit he says all men must be regenerate and born again, before they can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; with the special Graces of it he inspired his Apostles for the work of their Ministry, when he breathed on them, and said, Receive the Holy Ghost. He tells them that this Spirit should lead them into all truth, and give them a mouth and wisdom which all their Adversaries should not be able to gain-say or resist.

SO that we see this Spirit animates the mystical Body of Christ the Church, as necessarily as the Blood

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and Animal Spirits quicken the natural Body of man. And therefore it is that he makes repeated promises to his Apostles, that after his Ascension and departure from them, he would send him down upon them to supply his absence, in a more eminent manner than ever they had received him before. And it was part of his last charge and farewell Speech to them, not to stir out of Jerusalem and enter upon their Mission, before they had received the manifestations of this promised Spirit.

AND he was manifested to them ten days after the Ascension, and fifty after the Passion or last Pasfover of their Lord. For when they were all affembled together for Religious Worship on the first day of the week, in a House at Ferusalem, they were suddenly filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke with variety of Tongues, the Spirit enabling them to utter their Sense in all such Languages, as were needful for the instruction of the mixt Multitude that heard them. Ats ii. And the same Spirit inspired them with Eloquence to speak very well to the purpose, and with courage to profess Christ openly and boldly in the Temple and Streets of Jerusalem. So that they who, seven weeks before, at the Tryal of their Master, forfook him and fled, like Sheep when their Shepherd is smitten, were now grown fearless of their own lives, so that they might but serve their Lord. This wonderful change, from the most timerous to the most undaunted minds, was one plain demonstration, among many others, of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, who is a Spirit of courage and comfort, who turns darkness into light, fear into fortitude, despair into hope, and sorrow into joy.

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NOW this is the reason of our Christian Penter cost. At this time it was that the Laws of Christ's Kingdom began to be proclaimed from Mount Sion, and his worship went forth from Jerusalem. The thing is well known to all that believe the Gospel; and the commemoration of it, by a solemn Festival, will not seem an unreasonable or superstitious Imposition, to those who esteem the preaching of Christianity as a general bleffing to Mankind. For God ordained it as a Thanksgiving for the promulgation of the Law at Mount Sinai, though it extended but to one Nation and People: How much more worthy of our thanksul remembrance is this good and gracious Communication from Heaven, which is for the benefit of all Mankind?

ONE would think no body could scruple to do this honour to the Holy Spirit, except such as are insidels in the article of his Nature and Person; who are indeed much too numerous amongst us. In the Acts of the Apostles, ch. xix. we read of some, who after they were baptized with John's Baptism, had not so much as heard whether there were any Holy Ghost. We know there are multitudes of baptized Christians at this day, who have heard much of him, and yet do not believe in him, and consequently can reap no benefit by him, since he communicates himself to none but Believers.

affishances of the Spirit of God, why do they so mightily cry up human Reason, by which they mean no more than the natural Abilities, Faculties and Affections, which God has implanted in our Souls? As if every one that followed the Light of Reason, and the Religion of Nature, had as good a title to the Favore

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Favour of God, and the rewards of another Life, as the most spiritual Christian. But this is nothing else than the Language of Antichrist; it tends to make the grace of God of none effect; it contradicts the uniform voice of both Testaments, which teach us, that except we are quickned by the Spirit of God, we have no life in us; that of our selves we are not sufficient to do any thing that is good, but that this Holy Spirit enables us both to will and to do those

things which are pleasing to God.

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IF there were no need of a divine Spirit to enlighten our Understandings, and sanctific our Wills and Affections, then there could be no occasion for any thing farther than the improvements of Reason by education and experience; and confequently no occasion for Prophets and Teachers sent from God, but only for a competent number of Philosophers to instruct Mankind in the art of Government and conduct of private Life. But now this way hath been tried, and found not to answer the glory of God, and the ends of our Creation. In this way the World has run out into gross errors in Religion, and corruption of Manners: Having wanted fufficient authority to restrain men, they were a Law to themselves, and did what seemed good in their own Eyes. And this is the reason why our Libertines are such Enemies to all Revelation, and so fond of what they call Nature, that they may be fervants to none but their own Lusts, and live without God in the World.

BUT, if there be any truth in our facred Books, nothing is more certain than this, that God has had his chosen Servants in all Ages, and called them out by express Revelation from the rest of the World, and gathered them into Families and Churches by themselves.

themselves, and governed them by Laws and Ordi-

nances of his own special appointment.

THESE have been styled the Hely Nation, and peculiar People of God; and in comparison of them the rest of mankind have been reputed as aliens and enemies to him. The whole World is faid to lie in Sin; the Gentiles fit in darkness and the shadow of Death; natural Men are under the Wrath of God, and sentence of Condemnation; they have no claim of inheritance in the life to come. But to fuch only as receive his Son, to them he gives power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name: who are born, not of Blood, nor of the will of the Flesh, nor of the will of Man, but of God.

THIS is the Doctrine of those Scriptures which we have been taught to call the Word of God, and to esteem as Oracles which direct us in the way to everlasting Life. How comes it to pass then, that being of so great importance to us, they have no more influence upon our Hearts and Minds? The reason is, because we are for the most part destitute of the Spirit of God, which alone can open our Eyes to fee, our Ears to hear, and our Hearts to understand; which can enable us to live by Faith, not by Sight, and invigorate our Hopes, and feed us with Joy unspeakable, and most fincere consolations, in the sense and affurance of our adoption through Christ into the Family of the Bleffed; for the Divine Spirit beareth Witness with our Spirits, that we are the Children of God; and feals us by his Testimony unto the day of Redemption. If we are no more elevated and affected with the Word of God, than natural, unregenerate Men; if we can hear the Doctrines of it without Faith, the Promises without Hope, the love of. of God in Christ towards us without mutual emotions and affections towards him, it is because his Spirit dwelleth not in us, reigneth not in our Hearts, seeds us not with the gracious fruits of his holy Inspiration. In short, where there is no quickening virtue of this divine Spirit, all external means and exercises of Religion, are but as food offered to a dead Corps, they profit nothing.

IT highly concerns us therefore to procure to our selves the Communion and Assistance of this blessed Spirit. And how shall we procure it? Why, our Saviour has assured us that if we ask it of our heavenly Father, he will not fail to give it us. Devout Prayer is the first means we are to apply, for the attainment of

this Gift of God.

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AND besides Prayer, the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments is very conducive to this end. For though it is too well known that the outward acts of Worship are in many People meer form, and have nothing of the spirit and power of Religion in them; yet these Exercises are as necessary to the Spiritual, as the human body is to constitute the Natural Man. And they who oppose and exclaim against them, resist the Ordinance of God, and join hands with other Antichristians, to destroy his Kingdom

amongst Men. He has erected a visible Church, con-

fifting of external forms and acts of Worship, which

are therefore called the Means of Grace, because they

convey Divine Grace and Virtue to the Souls of the

FARTHER, A third way to obtain this Holy Spirit, is to abstain from wanton Diversions, too great encumbrances of worldly Assairs, and Intemperance in eating, drinking, and sleep: And to watch over our Vol. II.

carnal Passions, that they break not out into a Flame, and carefully to avoid those occasions which are apt to irritate and provoke them. For all these things are contrary to that Gravity and Wisdom, that Holiness and Purity, that Meekness, Sedateness, and Long-suffering, which are essential properties of the Spirit of God.

AND that we may thrive in these endeavours, and daily advance from less to greater degrees of spiritual Grace and Strength, let us add Thanksgivings to our Prayers, and bless God for what we have already attained, and make our acknowledgments of his Benefits, not only with the words of our lips and the obeifance of our bodies, but likewise with such a portion of our worldly goods as may be requifite for the maintenance of Religion, and the fuccour of our poor Brethren. We have heard from my Text, that when Israel kept the Feast of Pentecost, every one was obliged to bring with him the tribute of a Free-will Offering, i. e. some Present for the Priests and Ministers of Religion, which was no part of their tythe, nor any thing of the facrifices injoined by the Law. Nor might they be sparing and niggardly in the Quantity of this Tribute; but it was to bear proportion to the Estate and Riches wherewith God had blessed them. A bountiful offering, upon this occasion, was a testimony of the love and regard which they had to the Law which God had given them.

AND surely, if we had faith to believe that our Religion was a great blessing to the World, the richer fort amongst us would be particularly zealous in doing works of piety and charity at this Season, when we commemorate the first sending forth of the Apostles, to propagate the knowledge of the true God,

and faith of Jesus Christ, all over the face of the Earth: Our glory to God and our good will towards Men should now be testified, in the most eminent manner we are able to express it.

IT may feem but a small thing which I shall alledge to this purpose, but it may serve as a good monument of the piety of our Ancestors, what I find in ancient Books, That it was a custom amongst them upon this day, to give all the milk of their Ewes and Kine to their poor neighbours, for the love of God, and in order to qualify themselves to receive the blesfings of the Holy Spirit. And from the food which the poor made of that milk, called White-meat, this day, fays my Author, is supposed by some to have taken the name of Whit funday. Though others, I confess, think 'tis so named from the white Garments which those who were baptized, at this time put on. For anciently Baptism was generally administred to grown Persons (as many as came in from Paganism to the Christian Church) only at Easter and Whitsuntide: At Easter, in honour of Christ's death and resurrection, whereunto the action of Baptism corresponded; and at Whit suntide, in memory of his promise accomplished in his Apostles, who were then baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and who at the same time baptized three thousand Persons. At this Seafon, I fay, the newly baptized did anciently come to Church in white Garments, with lighted Tapers carried before them, to denote that they had now cast away the works of Darkness, and were become children of Light, resolving for the future to lead a new, innocent, and unspotted life. But afterwards, in the progress of Christianity, when few besides infants wanted to be baptized, this custom was altered, and Baptism

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Baptism administred at all times of the year, as it had been at the beginning of Christianity. However, the name was still continued to the day. But to conclude:

LET us make full proof to ourselves and others. that we are regenerate and become new creatures. that we are united to Christ and dwell in him, by bringing forth the fruits of his Holy Spirit; which if we do, we shall certainly abstain from the works of the flesh, those corrupt ones I mean, which are censured and condemned in Holy Scripture: For a good Christian can no more allow of them in his pra-Rice and conversation, than a good tree can bring forth evil fruit; or than the same fountain can yield both sweet water and bitter. Let us consider that the Grace of God has long been teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godlily in this present World; and be afraid, lest continuing in Sin, during this abundance of Grace, we should be hardened through the deceitfulness of it; lest we should either be tempted to think that fanctification is not necessary to please God, or mistake the works of the Flesh for the fruits of the Spirit.

LET us shew our value of the price put into our hands to get wisdom, by setting heartily and in good earnest about the work: Let us glorify God for calling us to this state of Salvation, and admire the method of his dispensations in the accomplishment of it; let us observe how the Father in the beginning, the Son in the sulness of time, the Holy Ghost in these later days of the World, have all taken their turn, as I may say, to visit sinful Men, and dwell amongst us. This without controversy is a great mystery of the Divine Love; but the design is plain, which is to sanctify

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fanctify and prepare us for the Kingdom of Heaven. O let this love raise us from groveling upon the Earth, to aspire at Immortality, and even now to go out of the body, and in heart and affection to dwell with this glorious Being, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. To whom, three Persons and one God, may we render all Honour and Praise, World without end.





SERMON XLVIII.

On WHITSUNDAY.

EVENING.

ISAIAH xi. 1, 2.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the Stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.



S this Prophet begins his Book with a severe Invective against the sins of his people, so he assures them that he saw the sword of divine vengeance brandished over their heads, and he often names the Assy-

rian for the hand which should strike with it. And indeed he lived to see his own Prophecy sulfilled. For after Israel and Judah had, by their mutual quarrels, weakned one another, the Kings of Asyria invaded them, and made a prey of them both. First, Tiglath Pileser spoiled the lands of Zebulun and Nephthali. Then comes his Son Salmaneser, and carries away the ten Tribes of Israel into Captivity. Afterwards his Son

Sennacherib

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Sennacherib attempted the like conquest of Judah. Isaiah gives us the history of his invasion, Chap. xxxvi. where he tells us, this Assyrian took all the defenced cities of Judah, i. e. all the frontier towns which were fortified for the defence of the country: and thought to have taken Jerusalem, as his Father did Samaria; though by the special hand of God he was prevented, as our Prophet had foretold. Let us hear what he says of him in the tenth Chapter, which will serve as a good introduction to the words of my Text.

HE begins at the fifth verse of that Chapter, with the character of this Assirian, whom he calls, the rod of God's anger and the staff of his indignation, appointed for the chastisement of his hypocritical people, to spoil them, and to make a prey of them, and tread them down as the mire in the streets. He likewise compares him to an ax, wherewith he will lop the boughs of his forest, and cut down the tall cedars of Lebanon. This is a metaphor whereby is fignified the destruction of the people by the sword. And because Lebanon was a mountain of Judea, famous for Cedars, the first and best of Trees; the cutting down these Cedars is used here to denote the fall of the Kings and Princes of Judah. Nevertheless, says he, the house of David shall not be utterly eradicated, but a root and stock of that Family shall be left in the ground, out of which there shall fpring forth a branch, which shall be richly adorned with the bleffed fruits of the divine Spirit.

THIS Branch we Christians say was Jesus Christ, but the Jews who reject him, interpret it of Hezekiah. And true it is that Hezekiah was of the house of David, was cotemporary with Isaiah, and for his piety was delivered out of the hands of the Assyrians. But

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there are several reasons why the character of this Branch cannot be properly applied to him.

If, BECAUSE this Branch was to shoot out from a root or stem which was hidden in the Earth, and seemed to be dried up, and to have lost all vigour and power of ever growing again. Which intimated thus much in plainer words, that the royal family should lose its lustre and station, and pass through a great deal of obscurity; that it should disappear, as I may say, and after a long interval appear again. But now this could not be said of Hezekiah, who came to the throne of Judah in a course of immediate uninterrupted succession, and whose Ancestors were illustrious from David till his own time.

2dly, THOUGH Hezekiah was an excellent Prince, yet he had not that Spirit of a great Prophet which is here described in the words of my Text.

3dly, NEITHER did he smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, nor slay the wicked with the breath of his lips, as is here prophesied of this Branch of the house of David.

4thly, NOR was Hezekiah's administration so perfect, as that righteousness could be said to be the girdle of it, nor his reign so pacifick, that the Wolf and the Leopard might be said to dwell with the Lamb and the Kid. For though his personal virtues were very laudable, yet his Ministers and People were generally bad, from first to last, as we learn from the history of the Kings, and from the frequent complaints which this Prophet makes of them.

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what is prophesied of this Branch, viz. to set up a fundard for the gathering of the Gentiles, to recover the outcasts of Israel, and to have filled the Earth with the knowledge of the Lord: for nothing of all this hap-

pened in his time.

BUT that Jesus Christ was such a Branch, as thot out from the house of David, after it had for many generations lain hid as a mean root, and nothing of it appeared visible above ground; that he had the Spirit of a great Prophet; that he was able to flay the wicked with the breath of his lips; that he erected fuch a kingdom as was held together with the bonds of righteousness, and propagated such a spirit as would mollifie the fiercest natures, and make them live peaceably together; that he set up an Ensign for the Gentiles, and for the dispersed of Israel, to gather all the children of God, from the four corners of the World, into one Church and holy Communion of Saints; and that he filled the Earth with the knowledge of the true God, is what the records of his pedigree and nativity, of his ministry and miracles, of the mission of his Evangelists and Apostles, do so fully testifie, as leave us no room to doubt but that this character here drawn by the Prophet, is intended for him.

IF it be demanded, to what purpose the Prophet mentions so remote a branch of the house of David, when he is speaking of the calamities impending over Judah from their Asyrian neighbours, in which Ahaz and Hezekiah were immediately concerned; I answer, it was for the same reason as he prophesied before, Chap. vii. that a Virgin should conceive and bear a Son, and should call his name Immanuel; it

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was for the consolation of God's people, who looked for the redemption of Israel: to give them an assurance, that though they saw ten Tribes gone into Captivity, and must suffer farther devastations from the same Enemy, as well as from others who would rise up against Judah, yet they should still have a Saviour raised up for them out of the House of David, who should be the author of all the blessings which God had promised them.

But I shall confine my self to treat of those spiritual qualifications which were to distinguish this Branch of the house of David, here spoken of in my Text, where it is said, that the Spirit of the Lord should rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of

the fear of the Lord.

And, I. TO the Spirit of the Lord in general, no man ever had so great a claim as this Son of David; who in his Conception, in his Baptism, in the whole work of his ministry, was filled with the gifts and graces of this Holy Spirit. David prophesied, Pfal. xlv. that he should be anointed with the oil of joy and gladness above his fellows. John the Baptist teltify'd that it was so, and that God gave him this Holy Spirit without measure or limitation. That he was not like former Prophets which had the powers of it only in some respects, and its impulse and motion only at certain times; but that he had it in a constant fulness, being always ready to do the works and speak the words of God. He himself at his first entrance on his Ministry, took that Text of Isaiah lxi. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he bath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, &c. and declared, after he had read it in the Synagogue of Nazareth, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in

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your ears. And they all wondred at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. Luke iv.

NOR did this Spirit rest on him so, as to be confined to his own person: for he had the power to communicate it to whomsoever he pleased. This is the meaning of what he fays to the woman of Samaria, John iv. If thou knewest the gift of God, and bads asked of me, I would have given thee that living water, which who soever drinketh of, shall never thirst, but the water which I give shall be a well springing up to everlasting life. This is explained, John vii. 37. where he cried, faying, If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture bath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him bould receive. Of this Spirit he imparted to his Apofiles, when he fent them forth to preach the Gospel, to cast out Devils, to cleanse the Lepers, to heal the sick; to raise the dead. Another power he conferred upon them after his resurrection and a little before his ascension, when he breathed on them, and said, Receive the Holy Ghost. Whose-soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose-soever fins ye retain, they are retained. But the most illustrious manifestation of this Spirit, was at the Feast of Pentecost, ten days after Christ's ascension, when it came down from Heaven like a rushing mighty wind, and filled the house where the twelve Apostles were assembled, and rested upon each of them in the shape of fiery tongues, and enabled them to speak in as many languages as there were people of different nations then come up to Jerusalem to worship, which from the accounts in Atts ii. we may conclude to have been fifteen or fixteen several forts.

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THIS, in the opinion of an eminent writer, was the accomplishment not only of that Promise which our Lord had made to his Apostles in his last words upon Earth, that they should quickly be baptized with the Holy Ghost, but likewise of that other when he told them, that they should do greater miracles than he did, when he was ascended to his heavenly Father.

'THE gift of Tongues, says he, was of that na.

ture, that the like was never known in the World, neither before nor fince the first ages of Christiani.

ty: nor can we well imagine any other fort of mi-

racle that could probably affect men more, and strike

them with greater admiration, and could have been

a more sensible demonstration of a divine power and

f presence accompanying the Apostles, than to hear

and see them all on a sudden, perfectly speak so many

solution languages, which they had never learned before.

THUS I have shown in general how plentifully our Lord was endued with the Holy Spirit, and how he was able to communicate it to others.

WHEN I say Christ was endued with the gists and graces of the Holy Spirit, I mean this of his human Soul, which was capable of Improvements, according to that which is said in the Gospel, that he increased in wisdom, as well as in stature. Of this rational Soul are all those Scriptures to be understood which speak of Christ's unction, illumination, and direction by the Holy Spirit. For otherwise, as he is the only begotten Son of God, and second person in the blessed Trinity, the Holy Ghost is properly said to proceed from him, and cannot be supposed to make any addition to his divine persections.

LET us now come to the particular graces and virtues of the Holy Spirit, which adorned this Son of

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David here spoken of, according as we find them in the words here before us.

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I. THE first is wisdom; which was so eminent in Christ, that he is styled the wisdom of God: it was the first thing which the World observed and admired in him. When he began to speak in publick, his neighbours and acquaintance were aftonished at his doctrine. as far surpassing that of the Scribes and Pharisees; and they cried one to another, Whence has this man, this Carpenter's Son, so much wisdom, having never been educated as the rest of our Doctors, in the Schools of Learning? Why, he had no need of fuch education, being taught of God, as it is here prophesied in my Text, and in other places; and as he acknowledges, Mat. xi. 25. where he fays, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast bid these things from the wise and prudent, those who had assumed that character, and were so esteemed on. account of their Learning, and haft revealed them unto Babes, to those who are babes in the eyes of the higher part of the World, and in their own modest and humble opinion of themselves.

WHEN he had finished his ministry, he told his Disciples, John xv. that his insidel hearers had no excuse or cloak for their insidelity, because he had said and done every thing before them, which might demonstrate his mission to be from God. And in the next Chapter he tells them, that the Spirit which he was about to send, would convince the World of sin, because they believed not in him, i. e. would make them sensible of their contumacy and folly in rejecting that divine wisdom which he had taught. This is all agreeable to what he had said long before to certain of the Scribes and Pharises, when they required him to prove himself

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himself the Messiah by shewing them a Miracle: he appeals to the demonstration of his wisdom, as the first and principal proof, Matt. xii. The Queen of the South, says he, shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and behold a greater than Solomon is here; a more heavenly preacher, let the Gospel speak it, and much wiser in the conduct of life. In which he excelled all that ever were born: for he never spake unadvisedly with his lips; and was able to challenge his adversaries to the last, which of you convinceth me of Sin?

HE was wife and prudent in avoiding the fnares which they threw out for him by their infidious questions; which he sometimes answered with silence, sometimes with another question, always in a manner which shewed that he was superior in wisdom to all his antagonists. He was wife in the working of his Miracles; for he would not do them to gratify the vain curiosity of Hered, or of the Scribes and Pharifees; he would not lay any stress upon those which he did in private, and therefore he charged the patients to fay nothing of them; he would not do them for gain, applause, revenge, but only to relieve the distressed, and serve the ends of mercy and goodness. Upon the whole, he fully answered that character of St. Paul, Col. ii. 3. that in him were bid, or laid up, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

II. OUR Prophet's next note of the Son of David, is, the Spirit of understanding; which was eminent in our Lord. For he knew the Scriptures so well, when he was but twelve years old, that he disputed with the Doctors about them in the Temple; and all that heard him were assonished at his understand-

ing and answers. When he began to teach in publick, he made such an exposition of the ten Commandments, as differed very much from the received sense, but was perfectly agreeable to the mind of God, and to the laws of holiness, truth and goodness. His answer to that question, which is the first and great Commandment. was applauded by the Querift. And in all his difputes with the Jews about marriage, the Sabbath, the Resurrection, and a future state, but especially about things relating to the Messiah, he plainly shews that they did not understand Moses and the Prophets. Even his own Disciples and constant hearers were so carried away with the prevailing errors of this last fort, that he had much pains to correct them, and was forced often to repeat and explain the same things to them: Which yet did not suffice; for after his Refurrection, we find him reproving the weakness of their faith, and flowness of their understanding, and explaining quite through Moses and the Prophets, those Scriptures which concerned himself.

NOW for our Lord to be able to see the truth in such a heap of inveterate errors, to be the only man who could unlock and reveal those mysteries which had been hid from many Generations, is a clear argument that he was that Son of David promised in my Text, who should distinguish himself by a most pene-

trating and discerning Spirit.

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III. THE third part of his character is, that he should be endued with the Spirit of counsel. Our Prophet before, Chap. ix. had put Counsellor into the style of the Messiah. Which suits very well with the evangelical precepts; in comparison of which, what counsels, I will not say of the Philosophers, but even of sacred writers, are not lessened? Look into the Beati-

tudes,

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tudes, and see the extensive meaning of those short fentences. What infinite good would the first of them produce, if it were but duly regarded? Bleffed are the poor in Spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. This is an ax laid to the root of all manner of pride. and that is the root of all manner of enmity between God and men. If those who fill the chief seats of Christian nations, had but learned this first lesson of their profession, piety and reverence towards God would be every where enthroned. Nor could there be any want of condescension and good-will towards men, were superiors once perswaded that there is a Kingdom of Heaven to be obtained, and that these virtues are the fure and only way to obtain it. Again, How much is there in that second Beatitude; Bleffed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted? If this mourning were understood of no more than an abstinence from needless and hurtful pleasures, even so a suitable practice of it would rid Christian nations of innumerable shows, entertainments, and reprefentations, which intoxicate the Inhabitants of almost every city, and serve no other end so effectually, as to banish virtue, and recommend vice. - Lastly, (for I can infift upon no more particulars at present) if that third counsel, in favour of meekness, were at all regarded, we might turn our swords into plow-shares, and our spears into pruning-hooks; we should have no houses for the exercise of inhuman arts and sciences; brutal fury would be restrained to the woods and dens of savage beafts; nay, I know not whether these beafts would not put off their fierceness, were men once endued with a Spirit of meekness. I am fure the Sin of man brought in that rage and discord among the creatures, which they had not by creation. And they fhall

shall put it off, says our Prophet here, in the happy days of Christ's Kingdom, when the Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lie down with the Kid, and the Calf, and the young Lion, and the Fatling together, and a child shall lead them. I know Interpreters generally understand this of the agreement of men of the most different tempers and dispositions: but if men could once agree to observe the Laws of Christ, I am of opinion, that this of the Prophet would then be literally verified.

IN short, our Saviour is our wisest and best Gounsellor, for the conduct both of publick and private life. If Governours and Governed would but hearken to him, and consent to be his Disciples, not only in name, but in deed and in truth, we should certainly enjoy that happy state at present which was

prophesied of, and which he intended for us.

THE IVth note of this Son of David is, that he is distinguished by the Spirit of might. Now our Lord manifested a greater power upon Earth, than any King or Prophet that ever appeared in the World. For as to his authoritative power, he did but speak the word, and the whole creation, visible and invisible, readily obey'd him. Spirits, Diseases, Winds, Seas were subject to him. He was able to smite the Earth, as he did the barren Fig-tree, with the rod of his mouth, and to flay the wicked, as well as to fave the righteous, with the breath of his lips. He verified that saying of his, that the World could not take his life against his will; for he struck those men to the ground with a look, who first offered to apprehend him, and laid those guards in a trance as dead men, who watched his grave to hinder his Refurrection.

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IF by might, we will understand Fortitude, who was ever sound so courageous and constant as our blessed Lord? who spared not to preach his Doctrine openly, though most contrary to the beloved errors and vices of the times, and reproved the impiety of governing men to their faces, when they had more than once attempted to take away his life. Who when he could have commanded myriads of Angels to his assistance, yet submitted to be crucissed as a malesactor, and to be made sin for us, though he know no sin, that

we might be made the righteousness of God.

V. THE next part of the character of this Son of David is, his Spirit of knowledge and discernment: which was excellent indeed. For he knew the whole nature and will of God, and state of his heavenly Kingdom; he had the knowledge of distant things, before they were discovered to him by natural means. Thus he faw Nathaniel under the Fig-tree, and was certified of the death of Lazarus, before any one told him of it. He had a clear, infallible forefight of future events; witness his many predictions of what should happen to himself, to his Disciples, and to the whole state of the Jews after his leaving the World; all which exactly came to pass. He was a discerner of mens hearts, and knew the imaginations and working of their minds, by which he was enabled to difcover Judas, before he was detected by his Fellow-Apostles, and to reprove with all freedom the hypocrifie of the Scribes and Pharisees; according to what is here prophesied of him by Isaiah, that he should not judge after the fight of his eyes, nor reprove after the bearing of his ears, which is our furest way of forming our judgment; but by a faculty superior to ours, he knew what was in man, and needed not any affiftance to make the discovery to him. Laftly,

Lastly, THIS Son of David was to signalize himfelf by giving uncommon evidences of his fear of God, i. e. of his devotion for his service, and zeal for his glory. Which our bleffed Lord testified upon all occasions. When his Parents lost him in Jerusalem at twelve years old, and found him at last in the Temple, and told him they had fought after him with forrowful hearts; How is it, fays he, that ye fought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? He professes that it was his meat and drink to do his heavenly Father's will; that he fought not his own glory, but the glory of him that fent him. He teaches, exhorts, and commands his followers to fear and love God above all things; to do his will; and feek his Kingdom in the first place. He was frequent and fervent in his own prayers, adorations, and thanksgivings to him. Upon all occasions he vindicated the honour of his name and his worship. Particularly he cleansed the Temple with a remarkable zeal. And in his last extremities he gave up his life with the utmost refignation to the will of his heavenly Father; faying, the Cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it? not mine, but thy will be done.

AND thus we have found our Lord Jesus to be the Branch prophesied of by Isaiah, which was to grow out of the Stem of Jesse; and that the Spirit of the Lord rested upon him; the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the sear of the Lord.

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NOW for a brief application of what has been faid, and to shew how far we are all concerned in it: The Scripture abundantly declares, that we can have no benefit by the merits of Christ, except his

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Spirit

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Spirit rule in our hearts. Except a man be regenerate. fays he, and born again by the operation of this Spirit. be cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. We are framed, together with him, into one mystical body: of which he is the head, and we are the members: and we must be all united and knit together by the mediation of one Holy Spirit, and must be animated and quickned by those influences of it, which we derive from Christ our head. For it pleased the Father that in him all the fulness of it should dwell: of his fulness we must all partake, and be endued with spiritual graces, in some proportion to his grace. Every Christian must have, though not a miraculous, yet a supernatural measure of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

OUR bleffed Saviour professes in his prayer, John xvii. that he sanctified himself for our sakes, that we might be sanctified through his truth. For our sake he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, for our sake he was baptized, ordained to his ministry, and perfected with all graces and virtues by this Holy Spirit. And for our sake he sent him down from Heaven to give us new light, new knowledge, new hearts, thoughts, and desires: in short, to make us new creatures.

THIS then is the distinction which we may make between what is done by Christ, and what by the Holy Ghost, in order to man's salvation.

CHRIST took our nature upon him, and in it taught us the whole will of God, and set us a pattern of complete piety and virtue. He offered a Sacrifice for the sins of the whole World, he died, rose again, and ascended into Heaven in our nature.

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BUT it is the Holy Spirit which fanctifies this nature, which regenerates our whole Spirit and Soul and Body, which gives us a right, and enables us with faith and a good hope to call God our Father, and Christ our Lord; for, as St Paul teaches, no man can cry Abba Father, or faithfu'ly say the Lord's prayer; no man can say that Jesus is his Lord, or claim a place in the Society and Communion of Christian people, except he be endued with this Spirit of adoption. No man can see God, and be made partaker of his heavenly Kingdom, except he be

qualified for it by this Holy Spirit.

THAT this Spirit can work such a supernatural change in the heart of man, as may properly denominate him a new creature, is evident from various examples. For Peter, of a simple fisherman, became the principal Apostle, and preacher of the Gospel; Paul, of a bloody persecutor, became a faithful servant and minister of Jesus Christ; Matthew and Zacsheus were converted from the trade of carnal, covetous Publicans, to forfake all, and follow Christ, by the grace and influence of this Holy Spirit. St. Cyprian confesses that as soon as he was made partaker of the Grace of Christ by Baptism, he presently found light spring up in the darkness and ignorance of his understanding, he was clearly satisfied in those doubts which before were insuperable, and enabled cheerfully to do and fuffer those things which had seemed to him impossible. And Lastantius makes this challenge to the Pagan idolaters of his time: 'Give us your man of a reviling, scurrilous, abusive tongue; we will make him as meek and gentle as a lamb. Give us your rapacious, insatiable miser; we will make 6 him

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him a liberal, charitable dispenser to the poor with

his own hands. Give us your man that is frighted

at the thoughts of pain and death; and you shall

presently see him undaunted at the menaces of fire,

racks or crosses. Give us your lewd, adulterous,

debauched libertines; we will return them fober,

chafte, and temperate. Give us your cruel, blood-

thirfty ruffian, and you shall see his fury turned

into clemency and tenderness. Lastly, give us your

careless, senseless, improvident wretch, and we will

return him a just, prudent, innocent man.'

SUCH were the effects of the Holy Spirit in those first and purest times. If they are now wanting amongst us, we must not conclude that there is any decay in the Spirit it self, or in the graces and virtues of it. But it is, because we may retain the profession of our religion without the power, using the word and sacraments of Christ, while at the same time we are no Christians.

our portion be appointed with hypocrites at the last, let us pray to him who has promised to give this Holy Spirit to them that ask it; and let us be careful not to grieve him with slessly, sensual, devilish sins; let us put away far from us lying, swearing, and cursing, debauched and filthy communications, blaspheming and reviling of God and men. Let us not abuse and prostitute the Gifts of God, our health and peace, our food and raiment, our leisure, wit, and senses to the service of those worst of Idols, rioting, impurity, and the corrupt pomps, pleasures and diversions of this World. But let us keep our selves as worthy members of Christ,

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Christ, and temples of his Holy Spirit, cultivating, seeking, and rejoycing to find a good encrease of his blessed fruits in us, which may bear witness with our Spirits that we are the children of God, by whose testimony we may be sealed unto the day of redemption, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord; To whom, &c.





SERMON XLIX.

On TRINITY Sunday.

MORNING.

G E N. i. 26.

And God said, Let us make Man in our Image, after our likeness.



N which words, as we have a manifest intimation of the mystery of the glorious Trinity, so we are justified in grounding it upon them, by the best and soundest of our Christian Interpreters.

AND we do reverently and thankfully embrace all such Provisions and Assistances, as both Jewish and Christian Churches afford for retaining this Faith, and keeping up a lively sense of this great Mystery; which as it hath been delivered and confirmed to us by the Mouth of God himself, by the Songs of Angels, by the visions of inspired Prophets, by the uniform Doctrine of the Apostles, by the constant profession and testimony of Martyrs; so it is daily confessed in our Creeds and Prayers, celebrated in our Praises, recognised in our solemn Benedictions, and inculcated in our religious Discourses, especially upon this anniversary Festival, set apart to the more immediate

mediate honour of the bleffed and glorious TRI-NITY.

LET us then, according to the design of the Day, endeavour to establish our Hearts in this Faith, and with all Humility contemplate, both the Unity of Nature, and Distinction of Persons in the Deity, so far as God hath vouchsafed to reveal himself to us.

And Ift, GOD has in all ages commanded his Prophets and Ministers to proclaim to all Mankind the Unity of his Nature and divine Essence. Hear, O Israel, says their great Legislator, Deut. vi. 4. the Lord our God is one Lord; Thou shalt have none other God besides him; but him alone shalt thou worship. ferve, and love with all thy Heart, and Soul, and Strength, and Mind. This is the first and great Commandment. This the rule of divine Truth, the voice of right Reason, the uniform works of Creation and Providence require us stedfastly to believe, That God is one; that there is but one Nature and Essence, of all possible Perfection, doing whatsoever pleases him in the Armies of Heaven, and in the Kingdoms of Men, the Lord of Sabbaoth, the Lord of Hofts, whose Will none can resist, whose Power none can restrain, nor say unto him, What dost thou?

THERE is but One infinitely and absolutely good; but One without beginning of days, or end of life, or dependence of being, who is the author and fountain of life to all other things; who fills all things with his Presence, comprehends all things in his Knowledge, orders all things in his Wisdom, is exalted above all things in Honour and Glory.

But 2dly, THOUGH there is not a line in this great Book of Creation, wherein we may not clearly read the existence and perfections of the glorious Creator.

Creator, though from every footstep of the ways of Providence we may conclude that God is nigh every one of us, that in him we live, and move, and have our Being; yet we cannot but experience the truth of those Scriptures which teach us, that the nature of God is incomprehensible, and the light wherein he dwells inaccessible: that however clearly and fully we discover his Existence by the Eye of Reason, yet we can know no more of his Essence than is revealed to us by the light of his Word. By which we must carefully direct our Steps, and conform our Faith entirely to this Rule.

AND therefore if the same inspired Writings which teach us the Unity of the Divine Nature, do at the same time assure us, that there are three Perfons in the Godhead, we are as much bound to believe this latter as the former, having the same insallible Word of Truth to justifie us in this Faith.

BUT now this Doctrine is taught us from the beginning to the end of both Testaments, and that

in very distinct and undeniable Terms.

THE first Intimation we have of this sublime Mystery, is as ancient, we see, as the Creation of the first Man; where we find the Creator addressing himself to his Work in a form of Speech, exhibiting a plurality of Persons, Let us make Man in our own Image, after our Likeness; which is not an invitation to the Angels, or any created Being to co-operate with the Father; but hath reference to the Son, the Wisdom of the Father, by whom he made the Worlds, as the Scripture abundantly testifies; and to the Holy Ghost, which moved upon the Face of the Waters, in order to dispose and digest matter into form, as we read in the beginning of that Chapter.

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AND as the History of our Creation, so that of our Redemption, begins with a Specification of three Persons in the Deity. For when the sulness of time was come, that the Son of God should take our nature upon him, the Angel Gabriel certifies his intended Mother, how she should conceive him, in these Words: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore that boly thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.

THE same Trinity of Persons is manifested again at the Baptism of our Lord; when the Heavens opened, the Holy Ghost descended like a Dove upon him, as he did upon the Waters at the Creation; and the Father spake, as appears by the Voice which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

THE same adorable Mystery is recognized at the Baptism of every particular Christian, who must be born of Water, and of the Spirit, before he can be made a Member of Christ, and the adopted Child of God the Father. This is the method of Salvation which our Lord has instituted, and in acknowledgment of which many of the Primitive Christians used the trine Immersion, or dipping three times in Baptism. And though that custom is grown into disuse, as being but a Circumstance, yet the form of Words which Christ appointed, is still retained as essential to this Sacrament. Go ge, says he to his Disciples, Matt. axviii. and baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.

HERE we have three distinct Persons, Authors of our Salvation, to whom we are equally devoted in our most tender Years, and oblige our selves in the same

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fame bonds of obedience, and do thereby acknowledge that they have an equal share in the Salvation of our Souls and Bodies.

AND that the same Epithets and Capacities, the same infinite Abilities and Persections, are equally associated to the several Persons of the Deity, I could easily shew, by entring into their particular Characters, were it not too tedious at present, and were I not fully persuaded that Christians are commonly well acquainted with them. I rest therefore in the more general Proofs of the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity.

THIS is that great Article of Faith, which is most essential to our Christian Religion; which is not of yesterday, but is coeval with the World, as I have proved from my Text, being in good measure apprehended and taught by the Patriarchs, Prophets, and their ancient Expositors: but the clear and full declaration of it to all the World, was reserved to the ministry of our blessed Lord, who frequently explains this mystery both in his publick and private Discourses, and speaks of himself, of his Father, and of the Holy Ghost in such terms, that any serious and unprejudiced Reader or Hearer of his Gospel must easily perceive, that there are three Persons in the Godhead.

UPON this Faith Christ has founded his Church, and commanded his Apostles to build upon this soundation; which accordingly they have done; their Epistles are full of this Doctrine, and they established it in all the Christian Churches which they planted all over the World. The Creeds and Liturgies of which Churches do fully acknowledge it, and it was ever esteemed the true Catholick, Apostolick Doctrine of the Deity. If any denied it, they were presently

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animadverted upon by Synods and Councils, as Hereticks and Apostates from the first Teachers. Indeed sew of the Hereticks were such confident Unitarians, as roundly and at once to deny both Son and Holy Ghost; but they set up at different times and places.

ARIUS of Alexandria cavilled at the first, and Macedonius of Constantinople disputed the second. But they did but cavil and wrangle, and endeavoured to explain themselves so, as to make their Notions seem Orthodox and consistent with the Catholick Faith; which is an argument that it was well established in the Church, and that an awful veneration was paid to it.

THE Arians indeed, who began under Constantine the Great, became so considerable under his Son and Successor Constantius, that they filled the chief Posts and Preferments about him, and boasted that he was wholly theirs.

AND yet after all, several of the ancient Fathers held Constantius to be Orthodox; that he adhered to the Faith of his Father, in which he had been educated, and was only imposed upon by the crasty management of these deceitful Men.

FOR this we have the testimony of the Historian Theodoret, Hist. Book iii. c. 3. who lived near those times, and says expressly, that though this Prince was prevailed on by those who had an influence over him, to reject the term Consubstantial, as not necessary in the Creed; yet he affirms that he embraced the sense and import of it very sincerely, confessing Christ to be verily and indeed the Son of God, begotten of his Father before all Worlds; and openly condemning those who presumed to call him a Creature.

THIS Testimony of Theodoret is not a little strengthened by those Encomiums which Gregory Nazianzen, who personally knew Constantius, bestows upon him, styling him, Most religious Emperor, and Most faithful Servant of Christ: A character which that great Bishop, samous for his couragious Invectives against Julian the Apostate, and for vindicating the Catholick Faith against the Arians, would never have vouchsafed Constantius, had he been persuaded that he had really espoused their impious Heresy.

DOUBTLESS these prevaricating Men imposed upon their Prince with the Confessions of Faith which they drew up in their Councils, which appeared consonant to the Nicene Creed in all things, save only that they changed the term Consubstantial for another word which looked extremely like it, though of a very different signification. This is a specimen of those fraudulent Practices which these subtle Men have always used to cover their ill meanings, and which it would be too tedious to recount at large in this place.

LET us rather study how to preserve ourselves from their spreading infection, and continue stedsast in the Faith of the blessed Trinity, according to the particular prayer of this Day. And that we may do so, we must in the

Ist place, give diligent attention to that most authentick Rule of Faith, and fountain of Divine Knowledge, the Word of God. For as without Faith it is impossible to please God, so without a diligent reading and hearing of his Word, it is impossible to have a well-informed Faith; since this kind of Science is a matter of pure revelation, and can be no

otherwise attained, as I noted before. And there-

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fore for any Man to attempt the explication of this inscrutable Mystery by arguments drawn from meer human reason or philosophy, is going to work without light; he will but perplex and bewilder himfelf in the Disquisition, as we see the Athenian Philosophers did, who derided St. Paul, when he preached unto them Jesus and the Resurrection, because they had no notion of these things; they were quite out of the compass of their Systems and Principles: They had never studied the ancient Prophecies concerning Christ, nor were acquainted with the History of his life, to fee how these Prophecies were fulfilled by him: But when several of their Profession took the pains afterwards to examine and compare them together, they were so well satisfied with the Christian Religion, as to become the greatest Champions and Martyrs for it. They faw that the Unity of Essence and Plurality of Persons in the Deity did very well confift together, and that they might confess the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be one coeternal and coequal God, without any manner of absurdity or contradiction.

AND furely to look upon our God in any other light than what his own Revelation of himself hath placed him in, is to mistake him, to conceive improper unworthy ideas of him; to amuse ourselves, and to take a great deal of pains to no purpole. For we need not be folicitous to know more of the Divine Nature than what is revealed to us; but it is certain we know nothing of it as we ought to know, if we neglect to fearch the Scriptures, which alone can make us wise unto Salvation, and that certainly is enough for us.

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IIdly, WE must exercise our Contemplations upon this great Mystery with profound Humility and Mo. desty; and to this end let us constantly maintain a due Sense of the infinite Majesty of God, and the weakness and narrowness of our own Understanding. If we believe and confess that this divine Nature is incomprehensible, why should we complain that our Faith surpasses our Understanding? Since we are not required fully to comprehend it, but stedfastly to be-If the Mysteries of our Religion be so unfearchable, that the Angels are always contemplating them with Aftonishment, why should we expect that any tongue of man should fully explain and unvail them? Is it for the Glory of God and our Happiness, that his Immensity should transcend our Apprehension? Let us then humbly and thankfully submit our selves, that we may be happy in his infinite fulness. Such humble Submissions are no derogation to the most consummate Wisdom and Reason of For the most capacious and exalted minds have ever professed their readiness to believe those wonderful things of God, upon the Authority of his own Word, which they might most admire and gloriste him for, although they could not answer that question to themselves, How can these things be? Acknowledging that if they were to contemplate to endless Ages, they should still discover in the infinite Majefly new Objects of their Admiration.

BUT then if we descend into our selves, and observe the shortness of our views with respect to those material objects that furround us, and daily occur to our Senses, we shall presume the less upon our Abilities to found the bottom of the divine Mysteries,

and survey the invisible things of God.

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TO fay nothing of Sublunary things; are not the Sun, Moon, and Stars exposed to our view? and yet how little do we know of them, by reason of their great distance from us? But what comparison is there between them and the infinite Author of them? Who can measure the height, depth, and breadth of his Existence? Behold, says Job, xxiii. 8. I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him. On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; be bideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. xxvi. 11. The Pillars of Heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. He divideth the Sea with his Power, and by his Understanding he smiteth through the Proud. By his Spirit he hath garnished the Heavens; bis hand hath formed the Constellations thereof. Lo, these are parts of his ways: But how little a Portion is heard of him? but the Thunder of his Power who can understand?

IN these things our greatest Wisdom is, to confess the dimness of our Understanding, and to complain of it no more than we would do, that we cannot touch the Stars with our Finger, or balance the Globe of the Earth in the palm of our Hand. If such knowledge be too wonderful and excellent for us, that we cannot attain unto it, the same may be said of the most enlightened and perfectly inspired men. The Holy Prophets and Evangelists themselves have not seen all that belongs to the Nature and Essence of God; not all his Attributes and Properties, not all his Decrees and Purposes, nor all the tendency of his known Purposes and Decrees. They never knew all that he intends to do, nor all his Reasons and Designs in what he hath already done.

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OUR Faces are covered from having feen the manner of the Son's Eternal Generation, of the Procession of the Holy Spirit, of the Union of the Divine and Human natures. These are dep hs of knowledge, which are too profound for the penetration of Angels themselves. The Seraphim who adore the Bleffed Trinity, Isaiab vi. have two of their wings given them to cover their faces. Those high Principalities and Powers, which refide in the inmost Court of Heaven, which stand continually about the Throne of God, and fee abundantly more of his Excellency, and beauty of Holiness, than we are able to do in these Houses of Clay, even they are always discovering inexhaustible Treasures in the Divine nature, to exercise their Admiration, their Reverence, and Humility, and to make them cast down their Crowns before the Supream Throne, and worship saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleafure they are and were created.

THESE confiderations should induce us to treat the Mysteries of our Religion with Reverence and Godly fear, and preserve us from being offended with any Article of our Faith, when we find it rudely handled by prefumptuous men; remembring the Predi-Etions of Christ and his Apostles, that in all Ages of the Church, but especially in these last most perilous times, there should arise false Prophets, seducing Spirits, who should bring in damnable Herefies, even denying the Lord that bought them. Let not our Hearts be troubled, nor the foundation of our Faith be shaken, by means of any such sceptical Disputations; but

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IN the IIId place, abide constant in the Communion of the Church, which the Apostle styles the pillar and ground of Truth. For there we are bound, by the Method and Rules of our Worship, to profess this awful Mystery in our Creeds, to adore it in our Prayers, to magnifie it in our Praises, to implore the Graces of it in all our Sacraments and solemn Benediction; and to treat of it in our Religious Discourses, not only upon this, but upon other high Festivals, of the Nativity, Resurrection and Ascension of our Blessed Lord, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost.

HERE, in short, we are obliged to read the Sacred Scriptures daily, in such order as is most proper to edify and improve a Pious Mind in the saving knowledge of the Glorious Trinity: Of the Father who created us, of the Son who redeemed us, of the Holy Ghost who illuminates and sanctifies us by his Holy Inspiration, and comforts us in all our Afflictions.

AND to excite us to this mutual Edification of one another in our solemn Assemblies, the Seraphim, when they glorified God in the words of Isaiah chap. vi. are represented as hovering about the Temple, to intimate to us, that in such places God is most pleased with our worship, and our Hearts are most ravished and delighted with his Gracious Communications.

AND it is farther observable, that they sung alternately, answering one another; which (if it be a safe rule to act according to the patterns of Heavenly things) will very fairly account for the Antiphones and Responses of the Church, as they are used either in our Cathedrals, where some things are sung by one side of the Choir, and then answered by the other;

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or in such Churches as these, where one part of the Service is first said by the Minister, and another part answered by the People. If we could setch this practice no higher than from its common date at Antioch, in the first and purest times of the Church of Christ here militant upon Earth, when the zeal of Worshippers was certainly very unseigned and well guided, it ought to persuade all true Lovers of their worthy Founders to approve and embrace it: But now when we derive it from the Church Triumphant in Heaven, and can truly say to God, with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnifie thee on this manner, then let all objections against this way of Worship for ever cease, and be buried in Oblivion.

THUS the Church is the fittest place, and her prescribed form of worship the fittest means, and a joyful concent of Hearts and Voices is the fittest manner to glorisie God, and to bring down upon our Souls the Blessing of a sound Faith, and clear understanding of his Holy Word, and a Spirit to think and to do always such things as are pleasing to him. Here is the Bread of Life, and the sincere Milk of the Word provided and administred regularly to all Believers: The grace of God is here dispensed to all Ranks and Orders of men; high and low, rich and poor are equally admitted to the Mysteries of Religion, and instructed in the way to Eternal Life.

WHILE we are in the Church, we are in the fold of Christ, we are intitled to his Protection; the attempts of Hereticks upon us are vain and inessectual; we have the Heavenly Host to guard and to secure us. In our Lord's own House we hear his own voice, we sit under his own Ordinance; the power

of which he hath intimated to us in that first Text which he took to preach upon from the Prophet Esaias; and which I the rather mention at this time, because it presents us with a proper hint, a ray of that Glorious Trinity we are now contemplating. Luke iv. 18. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because be bath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the Poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the Captives, and recovering of fight to the Blind. Now if the Gospel of Christ be suited to the capacities of the poor, blind, abject part of mankind; and if the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity be proved to be a Gospel Doctrine, then the poor wretches now mentioned may, by hearing this Gospel preached, understand enough of this Mystery, and believe it stedfastly enough to obtain everlasting Salvation in virtue of this Faith. If they will reverently hearken to the form of found words daily repeated here, they will certainly be enlightened with this Heavenly Doctrine, and be admitted to a clearer view of the Divine Majesty, than the conceited wise Man, learned Scribe, and subtile Disputer of this World. For Mysteries are revealed to the meek; and God resisteth the proud, while he giveth Grace to the humble.

AND thus I have, in some measure, laid before you, what it is that we believe of the Divine Nature, upon what Grounds we believe it, and by what Means we may best secure and confirm our Souls in this Faith.

To conclude all: LET us take heed that no seducing Spirit corrupt us in this Article of our Religion concerning the Blessed Trinity: For whenever we part with it, we shall at the same time surrender not only our Creeds, our Prayers, our Doxologies,

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our best Books, but likewise our Holy Scriptures, our Sacraments, and all the Blessings which slow to us from this Fountain: And, by consequence, we shall give up our whole Claim and Title to everlasting Salvation. For no man can have any access to the Father, but by the Son; and no man can have any Communion with the Son, who is not regenerated and sanctified by the Holy Spirit; That Spirit of Adoption whereby we dwell in Christ, and he in us.

LET us therefore hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering, as it has been delivered unto us by our Holy Mother the Church of Christ, from whose bosom alone we can hope to be advanced to the Church triumphant in Heaven; to the glorious Company of the Apostles, to the goodly Fellowship of the Prophets, to the noble Army of Martyrs; with whom we shall never cease to render all Honour, Glory, Praise, and Thanksgiving to the Trinity in Unity, World without end. Amen.





SERMON

On TRINITY Sunday.

EVENING.

GEN. xviii. 1, 2.

And the Lord appeared unto bim in the plains of Mamre: and he sate in the tent-door in the heat of the day. And he lift up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground.



N the foregoing chapters we read how God, having taken Abraham into his special favour and protection, communicated his will and pleasure to him by words, and once or twice it is faid that he ap-

peared to him; tho' in what manner or shape he manifested himself, whether in that ray of divine Glory which the Jews call Schechinah, or in the figure of any rational creature, is not mentioned But here in my Text God communicated with Abraham in the fimilitude of three men, who were travelling towards

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Sodom for the purposes mentioned afterwards, and called upon Abraham in their way thither. For so I explain the first verse of my Text by the second, and read them together thus: The Lord appeared unto Abraham in this manner; one day, as he was sitting in his tent-door about noon, and looking out, he suddenly

perceived three men coming up towards him.

THAT this appearance was a type of the bleffed Trinity of persons in the Godhead, is what the Fathers of our Church were certainly persuaded of, when they appointed this lesson to be read upon this day. And they had the authority of fundry ancient writers who went before them in this interpretation. We are told of some Chaldee Paraphrase (for I own I never faw it) which brings in Abraham faying, I beseech thee, O Lord God, if now I have found favour in thy fight, let not the glory of thy Mae jesty ascend up from thy servant, 'till I have fetched a morsel of bread.' If there be any absurdity in this paraphrase (as some who are against our interpretation of this appearance affirm) 'tis only in point of a very little time. They presume, and with some reason, that Abraham did not perceive the divine presence in his guests at first fight; tho' he was apprehensive of it before they parted, as appears from the sequel of their conversation: which let us hear, and attend to throughout, and then we shall be the better enabled to judge of the quality and condition of the persons here spoken of.

IT must be remembred, that when Lot parted from Abraham, by reason of the multitude of their slocks and herds, he went to dwell among a People, whose corruptions were so gross, that they were just ripe for destruction. They had been accused and

ment which shortly after besell them. For the execution of which he took the method of this appearance, accommodating himself to the senses and notions of mankind in this affair. I will go down, says he, and see whether these men have done altogether according to the cry of their sins which is come up before me: and if not, I will know. Accordingly he came down in the similitude of way-faring men, who being very unhospitably treated by these profligate citizens, justified to all the World the severity of God's judgments upon them.

AND he called upon Abraham, in his way to Sadom, for three reasons. 1st, To shew the difference between hospitality and inhumanity. 2dly, To renew the promise of his blessing to Abraham. 3dly, To

acquaint him with his visitation of Sedom.

Ift, GOD called upon Abraham, to shew us the difference between the hospitality of a man truly fearing God, and the inhumanity of those who had cast off all his fear. Abraham, who was now in the hundredth year of his age, and even for those times an elderly man, yet had a vigorous spirit for all the duties of a pious and social life. He was so far from being afraid of seeing a friend about dinner-time, or making his age an excuse for retiring to his couch or his chair, that he set himself at his Tent-door at noon, which in summer time, the season here to be understood, was very hot indeed. And when he faw the Travellers here spoken of, he did not stay till they came up to him, but as if he had been afraid of losing them, he ran to meet them, and with the kindest gestures and words invited them to take some refreshment with him. He made low obeisance to them, and thus addressed himself to the foremost of them:

them: My lord, if now I have found favour in thy fight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Let a little water, I pray thee, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest your selves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort your hearts, and afterwards proceed on your journey. No man living, who had made the greatest advantages of a publick Inn, could have given a kinder invitation to guests of the highest rank to have purchased of him what the good Patriarch resolved to give freely. But Abrabam, as he was the most eminent servant of God, so he was the most courteous and best-natur'd man of his time, both in word and deed. His deeds upon this occasion exceeded his offers. For having prevailed with his guests to fit down, he joined with his wife and fervant in furnishing out a speedy and plentiful entertainment; and when it was prepared, he brought it with his own hands into the arbour, and fet it before his guests, and stood at their backs to wait on them while they were eating it.

MHAT shall we say of this Entertainment? shall we call it a fine image of antient hospitality? I am afraid, that even in the best times, there were not many examples equal to this. I am sure the good Patriarch condemned a rich man of his own blood for his want of this sort of beneficence. Son, says he, remember, that thou in thy life-time receivedst good things, and Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. Abraham, says a great man of our own, was the father of a large poster

rity, and yet he is dead without iffue; his lineage

has failed in this respect. For who is there now,

who shows the same hospitable care of relieving

distressed persons? You say, you have it not for them,

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them, when God knows, a great part of what you have, is for them, if you would faithfully execute God's Commission, and dispense the Talents he has entrusted you with, to the purposes for which he has made you his stewards.'

HOWEVER, he who fays this, limits hospitality to those who are of the houshold of God, and, in appearance at least, worthy of his care and providence; and he puts in a special caveat against all sturdy incorrigible vagrants; against all that are given to rioting and drunkenness, to scurrilous and lewd language, to execrations, oaths, and blasphemies; always remembring the rule of our Lord, that it is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it unto dogs.

BUT with respect to mens worldly circumstances, the same divine Master exhorts us to give and lend, hoping for nothing again; and so did Abraham; sor he knew not at first, that his guests were any more than meer way-faring men, whose way happened to lie by his door, and might probably know nothing of him, nor ever see him again after that day. Yet considering that they were in a lonesome place, fatigued with travel and the heat of the weather, and that it was now the usual time of the day for refreshment, he invites them in as heartily, and treats them as respectfully and sumptuously, as if they had been his nearest relations, or dearest friends.

HO W different is this from that spirit of Perdition which reigns and always has reigned in the World? whose sons are of that sort which St. Paul characterizes, 2 Tim. iii. Inordinate self-lovers, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to Parents, unthankful, unholy, void of natural affection.

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lity of the Parent in them.

'affection, not to be trusted, slanderers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, treacherous, perverse, opinionative, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.' Whoever travels thro' such generations of men, ought to keep a Jubilee at the end of his journey, if he escapes the malignity of so many evil spirits. For one hospitable Abraham, he shall find many churlish Nabals, many envious Sauls, many calumniating Doegs, who all descended from Abraham, and yet had not one feature nor good qua-

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ABRAHAM was a noble Image of the most High, whose property is to be ever merciful and gracious. He was so true and faithful in word and deed, so full of humanity, courtesse, and benevolence in all his conversation, that he was the favourite of God and men. God was in love with him for his excellent Spirit; he did, as I may say, dwell with him, dined with him, entered into a familiarity and friendship with him, and was always covenanting and engaging to aggrandize his family. Which brings me to the

2d REASON of his calling upon him at this time; it was to renew his Promise of giving him an heir. For as these three men sate at dinner, and were much pleased with their entertainment, they asked Abraham, Where is Sarah thy wife? and upon his answering, She is in the Tent, the Querist proceeded to say, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son: i.e.

Reckoning from this day so many months as are

e necessary for the conceiving and perfecting of a

child, I will accomplish my Promise which I have

formerly made, and your wife shall be brought to bed

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bed of a fon.' Now this is the first discovery whereby we conclude that God was in these men. For he that renews this promise, speaks in the person of God, and with the same authority as before ch. xvii. 16. This must strike Abraham, when he heard the found of these words in his ears, and the speaker undertaking by his own power to fulfill them; this must convince him that he had God for his guest. And he presently tells us, that he was convinced of it. For when his wife, who stood in the Tent-door, behind the Arbour where they fate at dinner, overheard these words, and laughed at them. as impossible to be made good, knowing her self to be past child-bearing; the Lord, says Abraham, (and he now calls him in the original by the incommunicable name of God) asked, why Sarab laughed: Does she think any thing can be too hard for the Lord? I say, I will return at the time appointed for bringing forth a live child, and she shall have a Son.

This Promise deserved the solemnity of such a divine appearance and serious asseveration; for upon the birth of this child depended that of the Messiah, in whom all nations of the earth should be blessed. And so Abraham understood it. For to this appearance may be referred that saying of our Lord, John viii. 56. Your father Abraham greatly desired to see my day, i. e. my coming into the World ascertained, and he saw it, and was glad.

3dly, A third reason of God's calling upon Abrabam at this time, was to acquaint him with his intended visitation of Sodom. And this was a farther proof that God was in this appearance. After the entertainment was ended, the men rose up, and went

towards.

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towards Sodom, and Abraham, like a courteous entertainer, went out with them to bring them onward of their way. When it was proper for him to take his leave, two of them went forward, while the third made a stand to have some farther discourse with Abraham about this Visitation. He is called by the incommunicable name of God, as such he speaks, and as such Abraham treats him, and replies to him. The Lord, fays the Text, Said, Shall I bide from Abraham the thing which I am going to do, fince I have decreed to multiply him into a great nation, and to make him a bleffing to all people? For I know him, that be will command his children and his houshold after bim, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. Whence we see plainly that it is God that speaks, and that he enters into this free and friendly communication with Abraham, to give him assurance of the favour he had for him, to asford him an opportunity of shewing his compassionate and tender nature in interceding for finners, and to give him credit with his own Posterity and all the World, who should hear how fully God had revealed himself to him, and what great account he made of him.

I. GOD'S acquainting Abraham with his intended Visitation of Sodom, was an assurance of the savour which he had for him. For this and the neighbouring cities which suffered with it, were nigh the place of Abraham's abode; and therefore the thunders and lightnings which were sent from Heaven to destroy them, might have astonished Abraham, and put him in doubt of his own safety, had not God been graciously pleased to apprize him before-hand of what he was about to do.

BESIDES, it was natural for him to be concerned for his nephew Lot, who was at this time an inhabitant of Sodom; and I am persuaded that God had certified him before of his pleasure to deliver him; for which reason we hear nothing of him in Abraham's intercession for that place. We find in sact, that he was delivered before the storm fell, out of regard to Abraham as well as to himself: for God remembred Abraham, says the sacred Text, Gen. xix. 29. and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow: at the same time he gave a demonstration to all the World, that he is able to rescue his servants from destruction, while he pours out his judgments upon the un-

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II. GOD apprized Abraham of his intended Wisitation of Sodom, that he might give him an opportunity to shew his compassionate and tender nature in interceding for that place. As he had been highly pleased with his humanity to strangers, so he is equally delighted with his commiferation of offenders? Abraham was the father, according to the flesh, of that great Mediator and Advocate, who made propitiation for the fins of the whole World; of whom he was in some measure a type and resemblance, in exercifing this office upon this occasion. Six times did he move the supreme Judge to spare the wicked for a certain number of righteous men; and the Judge heard him out with patience, and graciouslycondescended to every motion. Partly to teach us, of how great moment it is for the preservation of every City and Society, that there should be good men among them, like wheat among weeds; which when they fail, it is a fure fign that the rest are nigh unto burning. And partly to stir up our zeal, and encourage

encourage us to make prayers, supplications, and intercessions for all men, that if it were possible, none might perish, but all might come to repentance; and to affure us, that God is pleased with the intercessors. as he was with Abraham, however he may see fit to deal with those, for whom they intercede.

III. GOD intended, by this communication with Abraham, to do him honour, and make him respected by his own Posterity and all the World. This has gained him the peculiar and diffinguishing character, that he was the friend of God, admitted of his Privy-Council, to reason and debate with his Maker concerning his dispensations towards mankind.

- I will, fays God, apprize Abraham of the judgment
- I am going to execute, that he may speak his mind
- of it, and inform the generations to come of my
- condescension to hear every plea that can be of-
- fered for the greatest sinners, and my willingness to
- fpare them upon any terms, which even in human
- estimation have any face of good reason.'

ALL men who read this, and observe how God abated four parts in five of the price which was first offered to redeem these sinners, must needs say, that Abraham had a wonderful interest in his favour, and by the testimony of the divine Majesty was a very holy and heavenly man, very fit to be the father of many nations, and the founder of God's Church upon earth.

And thus we have seen how God appeared unto Abraham under the similitude of man. For tho' the shape was human, yet the speech was divine, in the person, and with the authority of God: as such Abraham acknowledges and treats the last that talked with him; addressing his plea to him, as to the Judge of all the earth.

AS to the mode of speech here used, it may be objected, that there is something like it in the Prophets, who were real men, and yet personated God in many things which they said. But then they give us notice of it by saying, Thus saith the Lord, hereby intimating, that they delivered their message in God's own words, and were no more than his Messengers. Whereas, in the case before us, the Speaker is expressly called God, and speaks every thing as from himself, and without referring to any one that sent him.

THIS I think is a just account of this sacred history: and the doctrine I would infer from it, is that which is intended by our Church, the mystery of the bleffed Trinity. A mystery, I say, or something hidden under sensible things which veil it; for the divine nature, directly and in it felf, cannot be made visible to mortal eyes. We cannot now see God as he is, but only thro' the glass of types and shadows. Neither have we any comparison wherewith we may compare him: and therefore we are forbid to make any similitude of him. And if any man will ask us, upon the case before us, whether the three persons in the divine nature are like three men, we must answer, Not at all. But yet none can deny that three human persons are proper to denote and fignifie to us, that there are three in the divine nature. It is most reasonable to think, that if God would assume any sensible figure, wherein to converse with us, it would be that of our own species; which as it is most natural and fit for our conversation, so it is the most worthy of any that we are acquainted with. We confess Vol. II.

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confess that by the condition of our nature, we are inferior to those heavenly Spirits called Angels; yet whenever we form any idea of them, we can imagine them in no shape better than our own; and in such shape they have appeared, whenever God has sent them on any message to mankind, as holy Scripture and other histories abundantly testifie. And if these creatures can put on our resemblance, cannot the Creator himself do the same, whenever he sees reason for it?

IT may be faid, this is too great a leffening of God; and if we fay this in contemplation of our infinite distance from him, it savours of modesty: but if we fay, 'tis impossible to be done, or that he has not actually condescended to do ir, we deny our own religion; for that teaches us, that the fecond person in the bleffed Trinity hath taken our nature, not in appearance, but reality; not for a time, but for all eternity. And if now in reality, why not then in appearance? If now for ever, why not then for a time, as occasion required? Most of our christian Fathers were perfuaded, that he often appeared fo to the Patriarchs and holy men of old, particularly where the incommunicable name of God, or divine honours are ascribed to him, tho' otherwise he be introduced by no higher title than that of Angel or Man. For which, among many other places, they alledge this Gen. xviii. and that he was the Speaker here, and held the discourse with Abraham.

I will not pass over that which Aben Ezra objects against us Christians, in his comment on this place.

They argue from hence, says he, that God has three persons, and yet that the Unity of his nature

is not multiplied; but they do not observe (what

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presently follows in the next chapter) that two Angels came to Sodom.' I answer, we do observe it, and allow farther that our own Apostle St. Paul calls them Angels, saying, Heb. xiii. be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for some (we suppose Abraham and Lot) have entertained Angels unawares. We likewife grant that our English Expositors have thought that these three men were Angels. But then as one of them says, 'The word Angel must not be too precisely interpreted. For sometimes it fignifies e less than those bleffed Spirits of God, as the Bihops of the feven Churches of Afia, are called 'Angels: and fometimes more, as Christ is styled the Angel of the great Council, Ifa. ix. and the Angel of the Covenant, Mal. iii. We know that Angel fignifies a Messenger, one that is fent, or acts like one sent about any business. And let these here be either Men or Angels (they are faid to be both; and both heavenly and earthly Beings are called by those names) we know that both are the names of creatures, and yet under either of them may the divine nature be veiled. We fay that the mystery of three persons in the Godhead was signified by these three men, who appeared to Abraham: and we think this appears from the whole conversation which pafsed between them and Abraham.

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HOWEVER, we do not fay, that this is a fufficient argument to convert Jews and Infidels to the confession of this Faith. We have abundance more clear and evident grounds for our own and their conviction. We see the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity interwoven in the whole body of the old and new Testament. But yet between those who make this chapter a demonstrative and concluding argument argument to prove the bleffed Trinity, and those who oppose it, as if it had no shadow of this doctrine, our Church hath taken a middle way, when by appointing this lesson for this day, whereon we celebrate the praises of this mystery, it declares,

That to us who have been baptized and catechized in the faith of it, it refreshes, it cherishes, it awa-

kens in us that former knowledge we had of the

bleffed Trinity, to hear that our one God manifested

' himself to Abraham in three persons.'

THAT Abraham, who was admitted to a most intimate communion with God, was endued with the knowledge of this mystery, and saved by the faith of it, is what, I think, we are taught to conclude from Heb. xi. But it was not for his sake only that this was done which is here written; it was for our instruction, that early impressions of this mystery might be made upon our minds: that this, among other arguments, might help to consirm us in the antiquity and divine authority of this Faith into which we are baptized.

IT is neither our desire nor our duty to say more or less of the Deity, than what we find written in his own holy Word. But whatever we find revealed of him there, we are bound to believe and confess, without indulging our own notions, or hearkening to the objections of our own carnal reason. According to this Revelation we must suit our belief

and worship of God.

AND fince the doctrine of the bleffed Trinity in Unity, is, as I observed before, interwoven in the whole body of sacred writ, it is for that reason taught in our Sermons, confessed in our Creeds, and made the object of worship in all our devotions.

1F therefore we are not resolved to renounce our Christianity, nor to give up our hopes of that heavenly Kingdom which Christ has opened to none but those who believe this doctrine, let us heartily beseech Almighty God, that he would keep us stedfast in this Faith, and evermore preserve us from all heresies and errors which are contrary to it, that with the blessed company of all faithful People we may praise and magnisse one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, World without end. Amen.



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SERMON LI.

On the first Sunday after TRINITY.

MORNING.

JOSHUA x. 12, 13, 14.

Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the Children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou Moon in the valley of Aialon.

And the Sun stood still, and the Moon staid, until the People had avenged themselves upon their Enemies. Is not this written in the Book of Jasher? So the Sun stood still in the midst of Heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.

And there was no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel.



HE occasion of which Words was this. Joshua, who was ordained of God to settle Israel in their Inheritance of Canaan, had begun to execute his Commission with great success. He had destroyed Jericho

and Ai, two confiderable frontier Towns, and had entred into a league of confederacy with the Gibeonites,

a numerous and valiant People, who inhabited a very strong City. This alarmed the Canaanitish Kings, who thought it high time to unite their Forces, and make their best defence against this Invader.

at Jerusalem, at the invitation of the King thereof, and joining all their several Armies together in one Body, they marched and sate down before Gibeon, as being consederate with Israel, and begun to make their assaults upon it. Hereupon the Gibeonites sent Messengers to Joshua who was encamped at Gilgal, to acquaint him with their pressing Distress, and to implore his speedy assistance.

JOSHUA, having received this Message, gave immediate orders to his Army to make ready for the march; and having performed such divine Offices as were proper for his undertaking, and obtained savourable intimations from God of a prosperous Expedition, he set forward with his Army, and marching all Night, presented himself next Morning in battle-ar-

ray before the Camp of the Amorites.

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THIS was what they did not expect, and therefore they were very much surprized and daunted at so sudden appearance of a brave Army; and with much difficulty went about to put themselves into some order for an engagement, which they saw was unavoidable. After all they could do, their consussion was so great, that they were able to make but a short and faint Opposition, and soon concluded that they were rather to seek their safety by slying than sighting.

BUT when they were escaped to some distance from the Army of Israel, such a prodigious storm of Hail fell upon them, as killed outright, or at least disabled great multitudes of them; so that the rest

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who were not yet overtaken with the Storm, were in the utmost Consternation, and fled some one way, some another, so that they became an easy Prey to their Purfuers.

THE Sacred Text fays, that God cast down great Stones from Heaven upon them; and if we should imagine them to be of a different kind from Hail, we are not destitute of ancient Histories to support such an Opinion. There are several Narratives in Greek and Latin Authors, of showers of Stones of an earthly Nature, which have been rained out of the Clouds. And Cardan, a more Modern Writer, in his History of various things, Book xiv. ch. 72. affures us, that in the Year one thousand five hundred and ten, there fell in Lombardy a shower of Stones, to the number of twelve hundred; that one of them weighed fixty Pounds; that they were shown to the French Officers, who had Wars in those Parts, for a great Prodigy; that they were of the greatest hardness, of the colour of rufty Iron, and smelled strong of Sulphur; that two hours before they fell, a great and constant fire had appeared in the Heavens, by which, as by a Furnace, the gross and viscous Exhalations which were about it, were reduced into Stones. But whether we are right or wrong, as to the way and means of their Formation, certain it is that such stones have been formed in the region of the Clouds. However, if this should be too hard for any one to conceive, we need not to understand any more than great Hailstones in this Place, which have been known big enough to wound, and even to kill the strongest Men; especially when they have been thrown down upon their Heads, by the particular Hand of God, as is here affirmed.

NOW when Joshua saw that God fought for Israel, he was affured that he had nothing else to do with his Arms, but to destroy as many of the Amorites as he could overtake; and had nothing to fear, but the want of day-light to compleat his Victory. For the obtaining of which, he had recourse to such means as never Man ventured upon before that time. For being full of Faith, and of the Spirit of God, he called out aloud to the Sun to stand still, and lengthen out the Day, till Israel had avenged themselves of their Enemies: And upon these Words, uttered with a frong Faith, there followed a Prodigy which was never seen before nor since. For the Sun was immediately fixt in the midst of Heaven, and continued there without Motion, the space of a Summer's Day: For at that Season it was that they went out to Battle. The truth of this Prodigy was so well known, that Joshua tells us it rested not upon his Credit alone, but flood upon record long before his Writing, in the Book of Jasher, which was a Chronicle or Collection of memorable Works which God wrought for his People. And from this History were framed some stories in the Heathen Mythology, but much difguised, according to the humour of those Writers.

THIS then was a notable demonstration that the God of Israel was the God of Heaven; for no other Power could have stopt the Motion of the Day; and since he did this at the instance of their Captain, in a great Battle, to give opportunity to their Army to destroy their Enemies, 'tis plain that he owned the Justice of their Cause, and told the World in a very publick manner, that Israel had his Commission for rooting out the old inhabitants of Canaan, and taking possession of all that belonged to them.

AND

A N D since the miraculous interposition of the divine Hand, by lengthening the Day, and casting great stones upon the Amorites, must needs be quickly known to all People round about, it may seem strange why they did not presently come in, and submit themselves, and labour to make their peace with Israel. Or if they were afraid that such submission would not be accepted, but that they should be all put to the Sword, as the Law of Moses seems to direct; why then did they not sly, and quit their Country to the Invaders, and seek out foreign Habitations for themselves, when they saw that God and Heaven were so evidently engaged against them?

BUT it is very probable they lived in Hopes, that God would not always thus fight for Israel, for they had heard how he had formerly forsaken them upon certain occasions, and suffered them to fall before the Canaanites. They had heard, no doubt, how Israel were repulsed, forty Years before this, when they first attempted to invade their Land; and how they were defeated for a while at the Siege of Ai, though afterwards they prevailed against that City, and took it. Hence they concluded that this People did sometimes sin against their God, and so forseited his Favour and Protection, and rendred themselves as obnoxious to the Deseats and Calamities of War, as other Men.

AND indeed this was the real Case; and it causes us to turn our Eyes from wondering at the obstinate resistance of the Amorites, to wonder at these Israelites, who were so often guilty, not of common Sins, but of the most provoking ones, of Insidelity, Atheism and Idolatry, and that under a continued course of Miracles, which God wrought for their deliver-

ance, from their coming out of Egypt, to the death of Joshua: Whose dying Charge and Exhortation to this People shews, how much they wanted a confant Monitor to keep them right in their Religion. and to put them in mind of God's gracious and wonderful Dispensations towards them and their Fathers. Put away the Gods, says he, which your Fathers served on the other side of the Flood, the River Euphrates, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord in sincerity and truth. 70f. xxiv. 14. Could there then remain any Idols in the Tents of Israel, after so much Pains that had been taken by the Promulgation of God's Laws, and the execution of his Judgments, to purge them out, and after the most High had deserved so well of this People, by walking in the midst of them, shewing them his Glory daily, and making his Arm bare in their Defence! This founds like a Paradox; and yet these Words intimate that Joshua knew there was Idolatry, at least in private, practised by the Israelites, to the end of his Days.

BUT he proceeds, and refers it to their Choice, whether they would prefer the Gods of the Amorites before the Lord. Not that he would have them to think it was in their power to chuse either side. But this is a tacit reprehension of their proneness to Idolatry, and Joshua intimates hereby, that he thought them capable of falling down and worshipping the Idols of these conquered Heathen. But was it possible for them to commit such a gross, absurd Impiety, after they had seen a shower of stones rained upon the Heads of the Amorites, and the Sun standing still to give Israel light enough to pursue them? The event shewed that this was possible; for after the death of Joshua, and of the Elders his Cotemporaries, they actually

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actually fell into this low and shameful kind of Ido-

latry.

THIS he seems to have foreseen; for he presently threatens them with the satal consequences of such revolt, Jos. xxiv. 20. If, says he, ye for sake the Lord, and serve strange Gods, then he will turn, and do you burt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. And just so it happened; for the Book of Judges, which records their Revolts to the Idols of Canaan, commemorates at the same time their Servitude and Oppression under Jahin King of Canaan, Eglon King of Moah, and several other idolatrous Princes of the neighbouring Countries.

THE Use which I would make of this History, is

to observe,

if, THE fignal and undeniable Evidences which God has given of his love to his Church and People; by appearing for them in a miraculous manner, and rescuing them from the Jaws of Destruction, when they were ready to be swallowed up of it. When the Success of the most weighty purposes has been despaired of, and no human or natural Means sufficient to attain the defired end, then has God immediately changed the course of Nature, and forced second causes to operate quite contrary to their usual way of acting: as in his manifold Dispensations towards Israel, particularly in the instance here before us; at which the most confident Enemies of Religion have been amazed, and forced to confess with the Egyptians, this is the finger of God, and to cry out with them in the Red Sea, Let us turn away and escape, for the Lord fighteth for Ifrael. I fay, the hand of Divine Providence has often been so evidently stretcht out for the deliverance of his distressed People, that the most atheistical

atheistical Persons have been convinced of it, and ceased, at least for a time, to say in their Heart, there is no God; for they have perceived that it was his Work. If any of them have reasoned against such Works, their arguments have been so weak and precarious, that no Man of a good Understanding could

ever receive any Satisfaction from them.

adly, THOUGH we abound with instances of fuch miracles of Mercy as I am speaking of, yet we should have been able to recount a great many more, if the World had been worthy of them. For though I do not believe God ever intended, in this state of things, to crown the most honest endeavours of any private man with a constant success, and that for many good reasons, too long to be now recited: yet I durst venture to affirm, that he never fails to do this to a Nation or People, whose publick Piety, Justice, Temperance, and Chastity, render them acceptable to him. There are many passages of his Holy Word, which persuade us to believe this. Nay, though there may be many things in a People which are displeasing to God, and want reformation, yet if their Governors happen to be men of true Piety and Virtue, who honestly labour to reform publick vices, the People commonly enjoy the Divine Mercies and Protection for the fake of such Governors; which was the case of Israel, who were for the most part an Atheistical, Idolatrous People, as I noted before, and yet they obtained many deliverances and favours of God under the Government of Moses and Joshua, and their following Judges, because these great men were his true and faithful Servants, and did what they could to make their People so too.

But 3dly, THAT which diverts the current of God's favours from his People, and provokes him to give them up to the will of their Enemies, is the prevalence of publick Sins. And Sin may then be truly faid to prevail, when Sinners have a great majority on their side, and strengthen themselves in their multitudes: when those who have the Administration of the Laws, do not heartily put them in Execution a. gainst certain Vices, which they love and practife, and therefore would have them pass without censure, that they may gain a Reputation in the World. Sin prevails, when the Word of God is not fincerely preached, nor his Wrath impartially denounced against all the forts of it, but the reigning and fashionable Vices of great men are spared, and the World is taught to believe, that the Calamities of unwholfome Seasons, of War, Famine, Shipwrecks, and Conflagrations, are not God's visitations for any particular Sins, but happen much alike to Mankind in all Ages and Countries. When the purity of Religion is neglected, and fuffered to be corrupted by fuch Herefies as affront and blafpheme the divine Majesty, when the Revelations of a future State pass but as a fable, and the rewards and punishments of it are little credited or considered; then may the dominion of Sin be said to be predominant, and much above the fear of God in the World.

SUCH a State of things as this, is unquestionably displeasing to God, as being contrary to his Nature and all his Laws. His displeasure against it has been declared by threatnings, and his threatnings have been executed by Judgments: And those People whom he adopted to himself, and undertook to defend against all their Enemies, and wrought a multitude of Miracles

racles for their Salvation, by falling into such a dissolute State, have changed God's Love of them into Hatred, and rendred themselves monuments of his vengeance and detestation, as they are at this day.

AND Christians who are ingrafted in their room, in the Kingdom of their rejected Messiah, and the privileges of the new Covenant, have had abundant experience of the like Dispensations. I can safely appeal to the Countries of all Christendom for the truth of what I am going to fay, that where-ever the true faith of Christ has been planted, it has constantly brought forth such Fruits as have exceedingly conduced to the temporal Felicity of mankind: It has vifibly improved the Genius and Spirit of the People, by enduing them with those Evangelical Graces of Justice, Temperance, Chastity, and especially with that brotherly Love and Charity, which dispose Chriflians to be fincere and upright in their dealings, to be ready to forgive Injuries, and bear with Infirmities, to be merciful, tender-hearted, and upon all occasions mutually kind and beneficent to one another. I do not pretend that the whole body of Christians have at any time, in any place, acted up fully to this character. Nay, I will allow that the greater number have generally fallen very short of it: But so long as there have been enough fincerely good People to make the forementioned Graces shine, and especially while Governors and Persons of Eminence have been of this Character, the whole Community has rejoyced in the bleffed Fruits of such a Spirit.

AND for the sake of a few such excellent Persons at the head of them, God has vouchsafed to treat the whole Body as his Family of Children. And let me say with David upon another occasion, seems it a

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fmall matter to any of us to be a King's Son? to be adopted by the God of Heaven, and have a licence and privilege from him to call him our Father, and to depend upon him to provide for us as his Children? Such honour have all his Saints, and such deliverances has he wrought for those who are thus allied to him, as plainly declare that he puts a vast difference between them and the rest of the World.

FOR a proof of this, we need not go beyond the limits of our own Island. Which, before the profession of Christianity, what was it? a rough, barbarous, uncultivated Wilderness. I do not mean uninhabited: But I say the Inhabitants differed little from the Brutes, either in mind, body, or estate, if we may give any credit to our own or foreign Writers account of them, especially to that of Julius Casar, who was an eye-witness, and has writ his Observations of them.

BUT when it pleased God, by the preaching of the Gospel, to enlighten their Understanding, and give them a new Heart and a new Spirit, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ took them under his protection, and blessed them with many fair Cities, well-cultivated Fields, Holy Churches, Schools of liberal Arts and Sciences, numerous Fleets for Commerce, and Forces for Desence; and he hath continued these Blessings through all Generations, even unto us their Posterity, as it is at this day.

WHEREFORE, in the words of the Prophet Samuel to Israel, I Sam. xii. Let me reason with you before the Lord, of all the righteous acts of the Lord, which be did to you, and to your Fathers. When he had called our Fathers out of their Egyptian darkness into the light of his Gospel, and had established his Name and

Worship

Worship among them, he was pleased to incline the Hearts of those that were in Authority, to make ample provision for the maintenance and exercise of his

Religion among them.

BUT when in process of time, succeeding Generations had abused these provisions to pride and intemperance, and corrupted the purity of Religion with many unaccountable Superstitions and Heresies, God would not suffer them to prevail so far, as to extinguish the light of his Truth, but raised up Deliverers and Resormers, who gradually purged out the Corruptions which had been brought into his Church, and in time restored his Gospel to its primitive simplicity and sincerity.

AND when the Patrons of Superstition rose up in the defence of it, and made various Attempts, by treachery and open hostility, to ruin the Resormation, God has always opposed them, and consounded their designs, and that in such an illustrious manner, as has been little inserior to the Miracle in my Text.

I shall not enter into the account and recital of such Deliverances: They are generally well known among us; I wish the reason and end of them were as duly considered. This consideration I shall endeavour to enforce, as the most suitable conclusion of this Discourse.

I ask then, for what End were fuch deliverances fought after and granted? I think our Laws and publick acknowledgments will answer, that they were for the preservation of our Religion, Laws, and Liberties, which we prosessed to be dearer to us than our Lives.

BUT I am afraid this profession was not sincere; I am sure Posterity does not act up to it: For can any Vol. II. A a one

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one be persuaded that those men have the interests of Religion so much at Heart, who are daily giving it the most deadly wounds in matters both of Faith and Practice, while at the same time they shew a much greater care of their Lives and Fortunes?

THE condition of Faith and Manners amongst us at this day, is such, that I am very sure sew People can with sincerity or probability of Truth, declare, that they would sooner part with their Lives, than

with their Religion or Virtue.

AND therefore, if they were now prest with the same dangers which formerly threatened, and were most zealous frequenters of the Church and Prayers to seek Deliverance, as they did then; we could not help thinking they were more sollicitous for their Temporal than Eternal welfare, and importuned God to put it in their power to take their fill of pleasure and enjoyments with security, and to do whatsoever

feemed good in their own eyes.

of God into wantonness, and perverted the design of our Deliverances. But where shall we find a cure for this evil? I know of none, except it begin at the fountain-head, and that those who have the administration of our Religion and Laws, will make it their business, both by word and deed, to put them in sulforce, and cause them to operate effectually upon the manners of the People. This is the end of all good Government, and the Fruit which God expects to reap from it. He has invested the Magistrate with Power, which he has commanded him not to abuse, but to exert it for the terror of Evil-doers, and for the desence and encouragement of those that do well.

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all by THIS is the only way to establish any Government upon a solid and lasting Foundation. Such well-ordered Societies God beholds with pleasure, and such alone can have a well-grounded assiance and trust in him, that he will be their Almighty protector and defender; they may lay them down in peace and take their rest, because he makes them to dwell in safety. For who knows not the truth of those ancient Observations, that except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain? that there is more help in his Name, than in Chariots and Horses; that Swords and Spears are but vain things to save us, without his Concurrence?

BRIEFLY, The favour of God is the foundation of all true courage; which is indeed necessary for the support of any Government; but how commonly is it mistaken? For it consists not only in what they call an undaunted bravery and contempt of dangers, but it must be animated by a just and righteous cause; and it must be exerted not only against outward but inward Enemies; I mean against the Lusts and Passions of its owner: for no man can ever be truly valiant, while he is a Slave to any vile affection; because such affection having the ascendant over him. must needs put him upon doing or suffering any base thing for the gratification of it; and must likewise fill his Soul with guilt, and cause him to consider God as his enemy, and to be afraid of being called to give an account of himself before him; and consequently he cannot act with that freedom and affurance which is necessary to constitute a truly valiant Man.

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TO conclude then; Let us befeech God to give us all Grace to testify our sense of his signal deliverances, by sighting against our spiritual Enemies, and redu-

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cing every Lust and Affection to the obedience of his holy Laws; and then we may affuredly promise our selves the benefit of his future care and merciful protection of us; according to those manifold promises which he has made to his Children, whom he has adopted through his beloved Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. To whom, &c.





SERMON LII.

On the First Sunday after TRINITY.

EVENING.

JOSHUA xxiii. 2.

Take good heed therefore unto your selves, that ye love the Lord your God.



N excellent charge of a pious Governour and tender Father of his people. Joshua had now established Israel in the possession of Canaan, and found it proper to confirm them in their religion by two fare-

wel orations, contained in this and the following Chapter. We heard before, Chap xiii. 1. that he was old and stricken in years, and we are told in the last Chapter that at the time of his death he was an hundred and ten, exactly the age of his ancestor Joseph, from whom he was descended by Ephraim. And there seems to have been a special hand of Providence in this Family, that as Joseph brought his Father and Brethren out of Canaan, so Joshua should bring their posterity into it again.

AT his coming out of Egypt he must be forty five years old, if that be true which Josephus writes, with

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good reason I think, that he survived Moses twenty five years: for these two numbers added to the forty spent in the Wilderness, make an hundred and ten.

THAT he was then a man of good experience in the affairs both of war and peace, appears from his being employed about the person of Moses, and, as we say, his right hand; appointed by him to be Captain of the army against the Amalekites, over whom he obtained the victory; admitted to the second place of approach to the divine Majesty at Mount Sinai, Exod. xxiv. 13. sent among others to discover the condition of the land of Canaan, which he reported with such sidelity, that God blessed him for it, and gave him an immediate assurance that he should enter into it.

IN the next place we find him destin'd by the divine oracle to succeed Moses in the government of the people, and to lead them into the promised land. For Moles being warned of God to expect his distolution quickly after he had feen Canaan from mount Pisgah, presently addresses for a successor, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the Spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out and in before them, and lead them out, and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd. And the Lord answered, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thing band upon bim: and set bim before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine bonour upon him, i. e. give him a share of the government in thy life-time, that all the congregation may be obedient to him, and go out and come in at his word; and Moses did so. Numb. xxvii. AFTER-

AFTERWARDS God gave a special direction by Moses, Numb. xxxiv. 17. that Joshua, with other principal men of the Tribes, should divide the land of Canaan by Lots and shares among the children of Israel; this is much spoken of in Deuteronomy, particularly xxxi. where Moses taking his leave of the people, called out to Joshua, and said to him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give

them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

HOW this was fulfilled, we presently read after the death of Moses, where it is said, that Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom, Moses having laid his hands upon him, an ancient ceremony for such a purpose: and God presently appeared to him, and encouraged him to pass over Jordan; the people at the same time recognizing him for their captain, and plighting their faith and allegiance to him, saying, All that thou commandest us, we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses. Whosever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words, in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong, and of a good courage. Joshua i.

WE have seen how Joshua was called by the suffrage of God and men, to preside over Israel in the room of Moses; and we find that his subsequent actions, recorded in this Book which bears his name, prove him to be worthily advanced and ordained to this great charge. The power of his Faith, the rewards of his piety and reverence of God's word,

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shone forth in a long course of prosperity, which was attended with many supernatural demonstrations of the divine favour towards him. For the waters of Jordan divided, and opened a passage for his army, as the red sea had done for Moses. The walls of Jericho sell down at the sound of his trumpets. The clouds poured down great stones upon the armies of the Gananites, when they were fighting against him; and the Sun stood still in the midst of Heaven to give him time to be avenged of them.

LET us suppose, as we must according to the former calculation, that Joshua was sourscore and sive years old when he entred upon his government: that the remaining twenty sive years which he lived, should be the most laborious and active part of his life; that he should be able in this period to conquer so many different Kings and people, as we read of, to reduce so many rocks, castles and towns as they had fortisted when they heard of the first design of this invasion, and to divide the country among the Tribes of his own people, to every ones content, is to me a demonstration that he was endued with more than human vigour both of body and mind, derived from the special promise and blessing of God, and from the prayers and hands of his predecessor Moses.

NOW the subject of this Chapter whence my Text is taken, is the first of those sarewel orations, which Joshua spoke to his people a little before he was taken out of this life. When God had prospered his Government so, that he saw Israel in a condition to live well, and make good their inheritance of the promised land, about sourteen years from the conquest of the country, and seven after the division of it, as learned men suppose, he called together the sub-ordinate

ordinate magistrates of the people, and the principal men of their Tribes and Families, whether to *Timnath-Serah* his own city, or *Shiloh* where the Ark of God was placed, is uncertain.

WHEN they were assembled, he stood up, and told them, that apprehending himself to be near the end of his life, he was obliged by his place and station to say something which might make good impressions upon them, as his predecessor Moses had done before him.

AND first, he puts them in mind of the great things which God had wrought for them under his administration: for the truth of which he appeals to their own senses. 'Ye have seen, says he, how our arms have prevailed against the old Inhabitants of this country; a great part of whom we have rooted out, and though some remain still unconquered, it is no more than what we were to expect; it is according to the word of the Lord which foretold us, that these nations should not be cast out all at once, but by degrees, lest the beasts of the field fhould take possession of their vacant places before we could inhabit them. However we have taken fuch hold of their country, that they cannot difpossess us, nor put a stop to our progress, if we are not wanting in our duty to God. Therefore I have taken upon me to divide among you, not onby the conquered but unconquered Lands, from Gordan in the East, to the Mediterranean in the West.

HENCE he proceeds to exhort them in the next place to a faithful observance of the Law of God. Ye see and know in all your hearts and souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which

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which the Lord your God spoke concerning you, all are come to pass, and not one thing hath failed thereof: you are entred into houses and cities which ve built not, and into vineyards and olive-yards which ye f planted not. One of you hath chased a thousand. and no man hath been able to stand before you. because the Lord your God hath fought for you, ' as he promised you. And so he will continue to do, if you cleave stedfastly unto him, and take care to love him with all your heart and with all your foul: and come not among these nations that remain, nor swear by their Gods, nor serve them. 'Then the Lord will expel them from before you. and drive them out of your fight, and ye shall possess their land, as he hath promised you. Be ye therefore very firm and constant in keeping and doing all that is written in the Book of the Law of Mofes, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left.' 3dly, HE forewarns them of the unfortunate change which their revolt from God to idolatry would make in their affairs. 'If, fays he, you apostatize from byour religion, and make marriages with these nations which remain among you, and run into their ways and manners: Know for a certainty, that the Lord your God will drive out no more of them from before you; but they shall be as snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this

good land which the Lord your God hath given you. As he makes good his promises to you, upon

the condition of your obedience; so will he bring

upon you all the evil things which he hath threatned, in case of your rebellion, according to what

• Moses foretold at large, xxvi Levit. and xxviii Deut.

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Upon the last of which places a learned Commentator has demonstrated, that not one thing hath failed of all the threatnings there mentioned to be inflicted upon the revolting Jews, but all have been suffilled to a tittle. For God's faithfulness is no less visible in suffilling his threatnings than his promises.

THIS is the substance of Joshua's first discourse to the representatives of Israel, when he apprehended himself to be near his end, and was concerned for their well-doing after his decease.

BUT in a little time (it is presumed in a year or less) after this, finding he had sufficient Strength of body, and thinking he could still bind his people firmer to their obedience of God's law, he summoned them again to meet him at Shechem, the place where they had renewed their Covenant with God, when they first entred into Canaan; and there he pressed them to be very stedfast and unmoveable in the service of God, by briefly reciting what he had done for them and their fathers, and how he had diftinguished them from all other people by his fingular mercies; by calling Abraham out of idolatrous Chaldea, and making him the father of his Church and People; by giving him Isaac in a miraculous manner; by multiplying the house of Jacob in Egypt, and in the fulness of time rescuing his posterity from thence, in spight of all the Gods and Princes and armies of the Egyptians: by attending them in the Wilderness with the fignal of his presence, fighting for them against Amalek, Sihon and Og, Balak and Balaam, i.e. against the powers of Earth and Hell: and finally by bringing them over Jordan, and making all their Enemies to fall and fly before them, with little help of their own fword or bow. ALL

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who had so highly honoured them by chusing them for his peculiar people, and so endeared them to himfelf by constant preservations and successes, had the sole right and claim to their service and obedience. And from hence he strongly infers the charge which he had to lay upon them. Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served in Chaldea and in Egypt; and serve the Lord. But, says he, after all the advantages of your religion which I have laid before you, if you are not satisfied about it,

but think you can do better, I can say no more,

only this, that whatever you shall think fit to do,

I and my Family will continue as we are, in the

· fervice of our God.'

THIS struck the hearers with horror at the thoughts of apostatizing. No, said they; God forbid that we should for sake our Lord to serve other Gods. We are sensible that he hath done for us all

the great and glorious things which you have re-

counted; we our selves are eye-witnesses of many for them. Therefore we will serve none other but

our Almighty Deliverer, who hath manifested him-

felf to be the only true God.'

FOSHUA, who was endued with the Spirit of prophecy, and foresaw things to come, could not dissemble the suspicions which he had of his peoples inconstancy. I am asraid, says he, that you have not a heart in you to serve God in an acceptable manner: for he is a jealous God, who will not endure a rival. Polytheism is a sin which he will not forgive: you will be apt to run into it; and this will provoke him to alter the course of his dispensations

fations towards you, and instead of your protector

to become your scourge, and your destroyer instead

' of your deliverer.'

BUT when after all, the people persisted in their resolution, and grew warmer in their protestations that they would serve the Lord; ' Well, said Josbua, here are enough of you to bear witness, that from this day you renounce all manner of idolatry, and adhere to the one true God. Now therefore put ' away the strange Gods that are among you.' (this shews that even then they kept Idols privately in their closets) ' and fet your hearts fully and wholly upon the Lord God of Israel.' Then he bound them in the bond of a folemn oath to stand to what they had promised; and enacted that this their protession of faith should be called the statute or ordinance of Shechem: And he writ the discourse which had passed between him and the people, in the Book of the divine Law, which he kept constantly at hand, according to the charge which God gave him in the first Chapter, when he entred upon the Government. And lastly, he took a great stone, or pillar of stone, and fet it up under an oak near the fanctuary of the Lord, and probably caused an Inscription of what had past to be engraved on it, and said, behold this stone shall be a witness, for it bath heard all the words of the Lord: i. e. 6 the Covenant between God and you hath been ratified in this place where this stone stands, which will serve for a memorial of it to all posterity, and accuse you if you break it, as much as if it had heard, and could speak.' And thus, when he had made an end of these things, he let the people depart, every man to his own habitation.

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ALL this I have represented from the two last Chapters of Joshua, as the most suitable enlargement on the words of my Text, shewing what a pious conclusion he made of a useful life, and how much he had it at heart, that after his decease his people should be stedsaft in their religion, and unmoveable in their adherence to the divine Law.

SUCH religious and zealous Exhortations of Governors to their people are highly commendable upon feveral accounts.

if, THEY are very pleasing to God, and a proper means to derive his bleffing upon the Government. God has appointed Magistrates to be his vicegerents in this World, and to make his image to shine not only in the exercise of justice and judgment, but likewise in their frequent, open acknowledgment of his supreme Majesty, by whom and for whom they are ordained to govern. He knows very well, that if the head wants eyes to fee and ears to hear, the members will never be rightly animated and directed to glorifie his name, to exalt his Kingdom, to do his will as it ought to be done upon Earth. Good Governours are good Angels; of a middle nature between God and men; and the more of God there is in them, the greater benefactors they are to the World. A Mofes, a Joshua, what a safeguard were they to an oftenoffending and ill-deserving Israel! So Hezekiah and Josiah reigned in bad times, when corruptions were grown inveterate, and they could but paint, as I may fay, the face of a reformation: they could not enthrone religion in the hearts of men; for when they were removed, the corruptions returned. Yet because they did the best they could for the glory of God and the advancement of his fervice, he was fo favourable

favourable to them, as in their days and for their fakes to spare Judah and Jerusalem, that they were not given up as a prey to their enemies. There is joy in the presence of God and his holy Angels, when the righteous are in authority, and the Judges of the Earth

praise and magnisie the King of Heaven.

2dly, THE pious Exhortations of Governors are very apt to affect their people's hearts with a sense of the divine Majesty, and a love and reverence of his holy name. They are apt to make more moving and lasting impressions upon their minds, than they would have done if spoke by a lower rank of men. We see how fond people are to get but a fight of their Head and Chief, and how attentive to all his looks, motions, and gestures; but to hear him speak like a Moles or a Joshua, would be universally and justly esteemed as a voice from Heaven. I doubt not but it was one great reason why God dignified King Solomon with the character of the wifest of men, that his excellent writings and fayings might have the greater weight. For though excellent in themselves, yet they are certainly the more regarded for the fake of their Author. I mention this to show how much it is in the power of great and governing men to influence their inferiors by good discourses. And I am glad to find, among the highest and wifest of ancient times, such a harmony in their commendations of true religion. Moses and Joshua, David and Solomon, and what other great one is there among the facred writers, who does not inculcate, above all other things, such admonitions as these in my Text, That we should be sure to love, honour and obey God, and ferve him in the first place &

place; that to do this, is the best ground of pleasure and comfort, the only way to obtain the selicities and avert the calamities of mind, body and estate: that we shall find God our best friend, or most dreadful enemy, because he is able to do whatever he pleases, to tulfill his promises of all that is good, and execute his threatnings of the most grievous judgments. This is what the bravest Kings and Princes have taught mankind; and they call it the sum and substance of all their wisdom. Which is such a glorious commendation of the benefit of true religion to a people, that nothing can exceed it. Whatever has been said of the advantages of human policy, knowledge, or learning, is nothing at all in comparison of it.

3dly, WE learn from hence how the pious Exhortations of Governors should be enforced by their own examples, and by the examples of all that are about them, of their family, or retinue, or men so dependent upon them, that it is in their power to remove them if they will not fear God, and make room for fuch as will. When Joshua had offered his people the strongest reasons to persuade them to serve God in sincerity and truth, with all their heart and foul, and to cast away the idols of their closet and retirement, and they had promised him they would do so; 'Yet, says he, you may do otherwise after all, and I cannot help it; but I can undertake for my self and my own Family, that we will be fincere and upright in the worship of God.' This alone is a just proof and demonstration that we love God indeed, when we not only keep his Laws our selves, but do what in us lies to oblige others to serve him. On the other hand, though the master and mistress of a Family seem to be well affected to religion, yet if they do not train up their

their children and servants in it; though their own speech and carriage be grave and serious, yet if they have prophane, petulant tongues about them; and though there be no imputation upon their own modesty and virtue, yet if any of their Family is publickly known to be an unclean lewd liver; such master and mistress do not at all come up to Joshua's love of God; for if they did, then they would, like him, exert their zeal and diligence, so, that none of their houshold should dishonour God with an evil conversation. But after proper admonitions, if they sound them incorrigible, they would no longer endure them within their walls, but cast them out as odious to God, and dangerous to the rest of their Family.

AND a proportionable blame is to be laid upon all Magistrates and Ministers, who do not endeavour to suppress prophaneness and immorality within the compass of their Government. For though they cannot know those that are without, so well as those that are within their own Family; yet there are slagrant offenders which they must needs hear of, and who will be brought before them: which if they do not endeavour to restrain by the authority which they have for that purpose, they neglect the honour of God, and suffer the powers of darkness to insult his Majesty, offend his servants, and corrupt his children.

THIS leads us, in the Fourth and last place, to observe the happiness of that people whose Magistrates and Ministers are men searing God and hating iniquity, who regard the souls committed to their charge as the redeemed of Christ, and heirs of eternal salvation: who are vigilant to prevent, and strenuous to VCL. II.

B b punish

punish sedition, rebellion and treason committed against the common Father and Lord of us all. Such Governors are the good Angels of God, sent down from above to gather his children into the ark of his church, and transport them into the Kingdom of Holiness and Virtue. They are continually restoring in man that image of God, which makes him look down with pleasure upon cities and societies, and delight to dwell among them, and pour out all manner

of bleffings upon them.

WHAT a pleasing sight is it, incomparably beyond all other glories of this World, to see Moses and Joshua revived in such Governors, men of truly heroick fortitude, humanity, and goodness, who cannot bear the thoughts, that any of their slock should, through their neglect or misconduct, be reprobates and sons of perdition: who willingly sacrifice their own wealth and ease, pomps and pleasures, to the salvation of their poor inferior brethren; who assure them by their thorough and exemplary practice of religion, that they are the servants of God, and believe his word, and recommend the duties of it to all the World, as the only means to obtain the blessings both of the present life, and of that which is to come.

SUCH Magistrates are the life and light of the World; they maintain a right understanding, as I may say, a sweet harmony and communion between God and men; and turning many to righteousness by their pious counsels and examples, they will shine like the Sun in the Kingdom of their heavenly Father. To them all the ancient Kings and Worthies of God, who glorisied him upon Earth, open their arms, and invite them to come and take their places

with them near the Throne of the King of Kings, our Christian Joshua (for it is the same name in the Hebrew) who subdues our spiritual enemies under our seet, and leads us into a heavenly Canaan, where he hath purchased for us an Inheritance of everlasting joy and satisfaction and rest from all our travels; and where he liveth and reigneth with the Father, &c.





SERMON LIII.

On the Second Sunday after TRINITY.

MORNING.

JUDGES iv. 14.

And Deborah Said unto Barak, Up, for this is the day in which the Lord bath delivered Sisera into thine hand. Is not the Lord gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.



HE fortune of the Israelites, at their first fettling in the land of Canaan, was exact-T ly answerable to the warnings which had been given them by their great Leaders, Moses and Joshua. Moses, Deut. vii. I.

charges them, when they came into the promised Land, to smite and utterly destroy the seven nations which were the old inhabitants of it. 'Thou shalt

- make no covenant with them, fays he, nor marry
- thy children to any of them; for by such marriages thy children will be turned away from following
- me, to serve other Gods: But ye shall destroy their
- Altars, break down their idols, cut down their Groves,

and burn their graven Images with fire. In doing this, you shall prevail against them, and the Lord shall deliver them into your hands; none of them shall be able to stand before you, 'till you have utterly destroyed them.' This is but a larger Repetition of the like injunctions which were given before, Exod. xxiii. and xxxiv.

BUT now we are fully informed in this Book of Judges, that the Israelites acted in every particular contrary to these Commands; They did not drive out nor destroy the old Inhabitants of Canaan; but contented themselves to get the superiority over them, and receive tribute from them; nay some of them condescended to be tributaries and tenants to the Canaanites, rather than quarrel with them; and they contracted affinities, and mingled, and became one People with them, and lived by the same Laws, and served the same Gods.

THIS was very provoking, and they were utterly inexcusable in acting thus, because very lately, under the Government of Joshua, they had abundantly found the power and presence of God among them, which upon all occasions made them victorious. Joshua in his farewel Oration to them, chap. xxiii. appeals to their own knowledge that they had feen how God had fought for them, so that none of their Enemies, though much more potent and numerous, could stand before them: And he charges them, as they value their future success and prosperity, still to trust God and adhere to his Laws; and not to mingle with the Nations that remained among them, nor marry with them, nor serve their Gods. For if you do, says he, know for a certainty, that the Lord will no more drive out any of them from before you, but they shall be B b 3 Inares

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snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, untill ye perish from off this Land which the Lord your God bath given you.

ACCORDINGLY when they began to fettle and unite with these devoted Nations, and shewed no manner of regard to the Divine Injunctions, the event proved just as it had been foretold them, and they were so far from strengthening themselves, that they ruined their affairs by such Alliances.

AND If, God fends an Angel, as we read Judges ii. to expostulate with them upon the experience which they had of his delivering them out of Egypt, and bringing them into the Land of Canaan; and to put them in mind that his promises were always grounded upon the condition of their obedience; which not being performed, they had forfeited all right and title to his bleffing and protection. In consequence of this we read chap. iii. that God delivered them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim King of Mesopotamia, i.e. of that Country which lay between the two great Rivers Tigris and Euphrates. This happened about thirty three years after the death of Josbua, and this their first servitude lasted eight years. The Mesopotamian King did not settle among them, nor impose Garrisons upon them; which made it more easy for them to recover their liberty, when one appeared to head them.

NOW it is observed by the sacred Penman of this Book (who is generally thought to be Samuel) that God, who was the peculiar King and Governor of Israel, raised up Judges to deliver them, when they repented and turned and cryed unto him: Such Judges could not be raised up, nor perform the wonderful works which they did, without the extraordinary influence

fluence of his holy Spirit; nothing less than such a Divine Impulse could animate them to look the greatest dangers in the face, and put their lives in their hands, while they attacked powerful oppressors, sometimes a-

lone, and always with very unequal forces.

THE first Deliverer who was thus raised up to Israel, was a Man of a pious and noble Family, Othniel, Kaleb's nephew, for he was son to Kenez his younger brother. And the Spirit of the Lord, says the Text, came upon him: it was the Spirit of Prophecy, says the Chaldee paraphrast, whereby he was enabled to foresee the event of things, and could likewise inspire the oppressed People with courage to rise and follow him, and sight against the superior forces of their enemies. Othniel, in the power of this Divine Spirit, led Israel out to Battel against Cushan-rishathaim, and utterly routed him, so that he could never recover strength to oppress them any more. This put an end to their eight years oppression, and they lived happily forty years after.

BUT after Othniel was dead, they returned again to their old evil courses, and worshipped the Idols of Moab, which brought them under the power of that People. Moab, Ammon, and Amalek, borderers upon Canaan, entered into a confederacy against Israel, and making an inroad upon them, they subdued them, and possessed themselves of the City of Palmtrees, i. e. Jericho, which was a frontier Town, and where 'tis likely they placed a Garrison to ensure

their conquest.

EIGHTEEN years they tyrannized over Israel, 'till they sufficiently humbled them and brought them to repentance: Then God being moved with compassion towards them, raised up a Deliverer, Ehud a Benjamite, whose Tribe lying about Jericho, was most Bb 4 immediately

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immediately exposed to the ravage of these invading Borderers.

THIS Man was so full of zeal for the work which God called him to do, that he went and slew Eglon King of Moab in his own Palace, under the Guard of his own Servants; and coming off bravely from this exploit, as he returned he blew a Trumpet in Mount E-phraim, and proclaimed to his People, saying, Follow me, for the Lord hath delivered your Enemies the Moabites into your hands. And with his Army he seized upon the Fords of Jordan, whereby he cut off the communication between Moab and their Garrison and Forces which they had about Jericho; all which he destroyed, and cleared his Country of them, to the number of about ten thousand men, of the choicest and most valiant of all their Soldiers.

HENCE ensued a glorious Sun-shine of Prosperity for fourscore Years together; I mean in Benjamin and other Eastern Tribes of Israel. For I suppose, with learned men, that not any one of these Judges ruled all Israel at one time, but some in one part and some in another; so that at the same time there were several Judges in several parts of the Land; and Peace in one part, when there was War in another. Thus while Moab was beaten in the East, the Western Tribes were invaded by the Philistines, who were repulsed by Shamgar; of whom we read no more, but that he was a very strong and valiant man; for he flew fix hundred of the Philistines with an Ox-goad in one Battel. A person of great credit, who hath lately travelled in the Holy Land, and past by the Country People at plough, measured several of their Goads, and found them about eight foot long, and at the bigger end fix Inches in circumference. They were armed at the lesser end with a sharp

pike

pike for driving the Oxen, and at the other end with a small Spade or paddle of Iron, strong and thick, for cleansing the Plough from the Clay that incumbers it in working. He took the more notice of this Instrument, in regard of the Execution which Shamgar did with it; and says he is consident any one will allow it to be a better weapon than one of our Swords. Now I suppose this valiant man Shamgar was surprized with a Troop of Philistine Foragers, as he was at Plough in his Field; and that he and his Servants opposed them with their Goads, which was the only weapon they had at hand; and by the Blessing of God put them to slight with a great slaughter of them.

MUCH the like Exploit is recorded of Shammah, one of the greatest Captains in King David's Army. 2 Sam. xxiii. it is said, That when a Troop of Philistines fell upon an Israelitish field of Lentiles, the People sled; whether Soldiers or Labourers, it does not appear. But Shammah stood in the midst of the ground, and with his own single arm defended it against the Philistines so gallantly, that he put them to slight; and the Lord wrought a great victory that day by him.

THIS brings us regularly to the matter of the fourth Chapter of Judges, whence my Text is taken; and where we have an account how Israel did Evilagain in the fight of the Lord, after the death of their now mentioned Deliverers; whereupon he configned them to a twenty years Bondage under the Tyranny of Jabin King of that part of the Country where the People, properly called Canaanites, inhabited, and was afterwards known by the name of Galilee. This Jabin was descended from an Ancestor of the same name, whom Joshua slew, and burnt his capital City Hazor down to the ground, as we read Jos.

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xi. 11. But the Canaanites rebuilt it, and restored their Kingdom with such a strong hand, that this second Jabin had nine bundred Chariots of Iron to serve in his Wars. Which is a greater number than any that we read of elsewhere. For Mithridates King of Pontus had but six hundred in a Battle that he fought with the King of Cappadocia, and but one hundred in his Wars with the Romans; and Darius but two hundred in his Battles with Alexander; and yet their Forces and Dominions were incomparably larger than this petty King's. However, he had several other Kings in consederacy with him: and perhaps had no other Cavalry than these Chariots.

AT the end of twenty years, the God of Israel, according to his usual compassion, looked down with a tender regard upon the Assistance of his People, and heard their cry; and begun their Redemption by the hand of a Woman, even Deborah, the Wise of Lapidoth, who judged Israel at that time: For this Sex has also been inspired with the Spirit of Prophecy and Government. Thus Micab joyns Miriam with her Brothers Moses and Aaron, as one commissioned of God to lead Israel out of Egypt. Thus King Josiah sent his High Priest and great Officers, to consult Huldah the Prophetess concerning the mind of God, and what he was about to do in Judah and Jerusalem.

DEBORAH being the mouth of God to the People under the oppression of Jabin, and having the Revelations of the Holy Spirit communicated to her, how they should be delivered, she sent and called Barak a brave Soldier out of Kedesh Naphthali, a City of the Levites, a Sanctuary in the upper Galilee; and asked him what he thought of a Revelation which she had from God, appointing him to raise ten thou-

fand men out of Naphthali and Zebulon, and lead them to Mount Tabor, where Jabin's whole Army should give them the meeting, and should all fall and perish before them. Barak disputed not the commission, but declared himself ready to execute it, only upon condition that the Prophetess would accompany him in the Execution of it, to the end he might be supported with her undeniable Authority in the levy of Soldiers, and might also be directed by her Spirit of Prophecy to chuse the most fortunate day and hour for engaging the Enemy. Deborah complied with his request, but told him, that since he would not undertake this Expedition without the assistance of a Woman, he should lose the honour of taking Sisera, Jabin's General, who should fall by a Woman's hand.

BEING thus agreed to act in Concert, they begun their levy at Barak's own City, and quickly raised an Army of ten thousand good men, which they led to Mount Tabor, as the Oracle directed them. 70sephus says they encamped near this Mount; others think they ascended to the top of it. Tabor is a round, high, and very steep Mountain in the Plain of Galilee, separate from other Mountains, about fix miles diftant Eastward from Nazareth, and is commonly supposed to be the place of our Saviour's transfiguration. It has a plain area at the top, of an Oval figure, about a quarter of a mile in length, and half as much in breadth. This is the computation of a modern Traveller, though Josephus makes it a great many Furlongs larger. And indeed he had reason to know it; for he Fortified it in the Roman Wars, as is remembred in his Life, and there are many remains of such Fortifications at this day.

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THE Israelites Army being encamped at Mount Tabor, the news of it was soon carried to Sisera, Jabin's General, who with great expedition drew out his nine hundred Chariots, and a proportionable number of Foot to attend them, and came up with the Israelites at Mount Tabor.

BUT because Iron Chariots were not fit to ascend fuch a steep Mountain, nor could Sisera's Footmen attempt it without great annoyance from those above, it is probable that they encompassed it at the bottom, and stopt all the avenues, that no provisions might be carried to Barak and his men.

WHEN they had done this, and rested secure in their Camp, without apprehension of fighting, for they thought to starve their Enemies, Deborah called upon Barak to arise, and lead down his men to Battle; for this, said she, is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thy hand. Is not the Lord gone out before thee? This she speaks, as if she had seen, as probably she did, the whole Fortune of the day, and scene of Action represented to her in a Spiritual vision. As if she had heard the voice of the Thunder, and seen the pointed Lightning shot from the Heavenly bow at the heads of the Canaanites. Lord's going out before Barak, intimates, that he began the Fight by Storm and Tempest against Sisera's Chariots, which lying in the valley at the foot of Mount Tabor, where was the Channel of the River Kishon, this River, small in itself, over-flowed so suddenly by the violent Rains, as is not unusual in those hot mountainous Countries, that it drowned the heavy Chariots before they could make their escape from it. At which juncture Barak and his men falling upon them, put them to flight, and had the chase and flaughter

flaughter of them to their chief City, Harosheth of the Gentiles.

SISERA alighted out of his Chariot, that he might escape with the greater swiftness and secrecy; how he fell into the Tent of Jael the Kenite, and how she accomplished upon him the prophecy of Deborah, is well known.

THE Psalm or Anthem which was composed by Deborah for a publick Thanksgiving on occasion of this Victory (and which was doubtless sung by the whole Assembly of Israelites concerned in the Deliverance) is, in the judgment of Conrade Pellican, a more noble and exalted Poem, than any thing that is to be found in the most celebrated wits of Greece or Italy. And there are several passages of the History in it, which are not to be found in the plain narrative contained in the fourth Chapter.

THE Prophetess begins her Song of Victory with remembring how God fought for his People of old, when he brought them from Seir, and led them out of Edom, how the Earth trembled, and the Heavens dropped, how the Mountains melted, and Sinai was moved at the presence of the Lord; intimating, in fine Poetick figures, what a consternation seized the People of those places, when they saw the powerful: Forces of Sihon King of the Amorites and Og King of Basan, utterly confounded by the poor wandering 1/raelites, or rather by a Divine Arm which was stretched out in their defence. This she says to shew, that one and the same God was both then and now the King of Israel, and fought their Battels for them. Then she proceeds to note the Desolations caused by Tyranny and Oppression; that from the death of Shamgar,

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Shamgar, during Jabin's twenty years pressure, the high-ways were unfrequented, Travellers and Merchants fought out by-paths, for fear of being spoiled by Robbers; and few People for the same reason durst abide in Villages, till God raised her up to be a Mother in Israel. Israel had chose new Gods, which involved them in War, and made them so much the property of their Oppressors, that there was scarce a Shield or Spear to be found among them, so generally were they disarmed. But now since the deseat of Jabin, the Judges rode upon white Asses, they were restored to their former Dignity and Reverence; the Merchants travelled fecurely in the High-ways, the Shepherds and Herdsmen were delivered from the noise of Archers in the place of drawing waters; for during the Oppression they could not lead their Cattle to drink at a Pit or Well, but they were shot at by bands of Robbers. But now their fecurity, fince the fall of their Oppressors, was a pleasant and happy change.

THEN she reckons up the quota which each Tribe sent in, to compose Barak's Army. Out of Ephraim was a root of them against Amalek, i. e. the Ephraimites begun their levy about Mount Amalek; for there is a Mountain of that name in the Tribe of E-phraim. And these followed the example of Benjamin. Out of Machir, an eminent Family in Menasseh, came governors, or Captains: And out of Zebulon they that handle the Pen of the ready writer, which was much to their praise, that though they were more conversant in Books than in Arms, yet they offered their service to Barak on this occasion. Isachar also, in Honour to Deborah, sent many gallant men. But the Reube-

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nites caused great divisions in mens Sentiments and Affections, by abiding among their Sheep-folds, and chusing rather to hear the bleating of their Flocks. than the found of the Warlike Trumpet. By their Example the Gileadites, though men of Valour, fate still at home, and would not step over Jordan to help their Brethren. Dan and Asher also remained at home in their Ships, continued their Merchandizing, and abode in their Creeks. But Zebulon and Naphthali put their lives in their hands, and ventured upon death to regain their Liberty. They were not daunted at the formidable Army of the Canaanitish Kings, which extended from Tanah to Megiddo, two Cities of the Menassites; and which fought not for the gain of Money or Spoil, but for the destruction of their Antagonists.

IN this History, which I have briefly recited, is feen how prevalent Humiliation and Repentance are to reconcile Sinners to God. For though his People frequently revolted from him to the Worship of Idols, and provoked him with their graven Images; yet when they had smarted soundly for their Impiety by the Oppression of their Enemies, and found there was no other way for their deliverance, but to put away their strange Gods, and turn to the Lord, and cry mightily to him for help, he was so merciful, that he forgave their Misdeeds, and destroyed them not as they deferved, but raised them up Deliverers, whom he inspired with supernatural Wisdom and Courage, and with a miraculous Power rescued his People from those Tyrants who, in human Estimation, were abundantly too ftrong for them.

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HOWEVER, These repeated deliverances ought not to encourage Sinners to repeat their Transgressions of God's Laws: For consider how many Plagues and Judgments these revolting Israelites brought upon themselves, by their frequent lapses into Idolatry. How many times were they given up to Pestilence, Famine, and Sword? By reason of their disloyalty to God, they were made Monuments of his just Indignation. Multitudes of them were cut off by his avenging Hand, and the rest consumed their days in Vanity, and their years in Trouble.

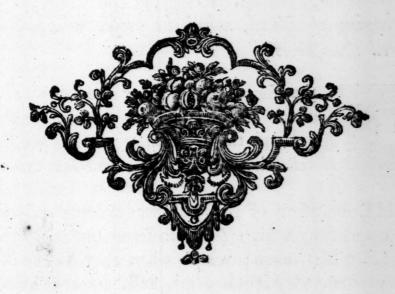
WHEREAS if they had been stedfast in the Worship of God, and hearkened to his Voice in settling in the Land of Canaan, as he commanded them, they had escaped the foresaid Judgments, and enjoyed an uninterrupted current of Success and Prosperity. For such God covenanted to grant them, and such they enjoyed under Joshua and their Judges, while they were obedient to their Laws, and submitted to good Government. And this is the Case of all disorderly People, who will not keep within the bounds of Religion and Virtue: So many Excursions as they make out of these Bounds, so often they forsake their own Mercies; which they can never recover again, till they return to their obedience of the Divine Laws.

GOD alone is the Fountain of all Happiness; and he will force all the World, sooner or later, to acknowledge this. He gives us all timely Evidences and Demonstrations of this truth, if we will but open our Eyes to see them. Every outward Calamity and Distress, every bodily Pain and Distemper, every Trouble and Grief of Spirit, shew us what

what poor empty Creatures we are of our selves, and how unable to subsist, if not supported by the

good Hand of God.

LET us then, above all things, labour after a well-grounded dependence upon his Fatherly Care and Blessing; let us dutifully confess that nothing in Heaven or Earth can help us without him; and let us beseech him to keep us under the Protection of his good Providence, and make us to have a perpetual Fear and Love of his Holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, &c.



Vol. II.

Cc

SERMON



SERMON LIV.

On the Second Sunday after TRINITY.

EVENING.

JUDGES V. I, 2.

Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.



N the foregoing chapter we have an account of a great battel fought between Israel and the Canaanites: in this we have Israel's thanksgiving to God for the vic-

tory.

THE occasion of the war was a long and grievous oppression which Israel suffered under a tyrannical King of Canaan; which when they had endured twenty years, they took arms, and, by the help of God, rescued themselves from the yoke of their oppressors.

IF it be asked, why the hand of Idolaters prevailed so long over the People of God, the reason is given ch. iv. 1, 2. The Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, because they did evil in his sight.

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WHAT that evil was, Deborah tells us, ch. v. 8. they chose new gods; then was war in the gates. The latter was made, by the divine decree, a necessary con-

sequence of the former.

WE lately heard what a solemn charge Joshua laid upon his People, in two farewell discourses which he made to them a little before his death, to keep clear of this sin of Idolatry: forewarning them how it would happen, that if they forsook their Lord and served strange Gods, he would no more drive out the nations before them; but they should be scourges in

their fides, and thorns in their eyes.

AND his exhortation had this good effect, that the People adhered to their religion fo long as that generation lasted, who had seen the wonderful works of God both in the Wilderness, and at their first entrance into Canaan: but when they were worn out and dead, their successors revolted to idolatry: Judges ii. 11. The reason of their apostacy is said to be this, that they knew not the Lord, nor the works which be had done for Israel: i. e. they had not seen them with their own eyes; for otherwise they might easily have known them by the teaching of their Parents. But I am afraid the Parents were faulty in this respect, and gave themselves up so entirely to their worldly affairs in their new Inheritance, that they could not find time to teach their children what God had done for them, so carefully and constantly as by his Law they were injoyned to do. For 'tis incredible to think this new generation could be wholly ignorant of the miraculous bleffings which God had vouchfafed to their fathers; but they had not been taught them with fuch diligence, as might inspire them with a just esteem and love of their supreme Benefactor.

HENCE it came to pass, that they often forsook their God, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. Where-upon God's anger burned against them, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers who spoiled them, and they were greatly distressed on every side. Nevertheless God raised them up Judges who delivered them out of the hands of those that spoiled them. For he was much moved with their groaning by reason of their oppression.

FROM the death of Joshua to the time of Deborah, which is computed to be about one hundred and fifty eight years, we read of three such Judges, and she makes the fourth. These Judges were inspired with an extraordinary spirit of courage and wisdom. For they did the part both of Prophets and Soldiers. As Prophets they took a deal of pains with their People, to reclaim them from the idolatries, alliances, and wicked customs of the Heathen: and as Soldiers they always performed some heroick exploit, whereby they broke the power of their oppressors, and shook off the yoke of bondage in which they had been held.

BOTH these offices were well executed by Deborah, tho' she was but a woman: For being endued with a divine Spirit, as is here affirmed, and likewise a Princess in Israel, as the Rabbins suppose, the People resorted to her to learn the Will of God, and took her judgment for their direction in all difficult cases. She animated them to affert their liberty, she chose them a captain, and ordered the levying of soldiers, and directed them as to the time and place of giving battel to their enemies, and accompanied them in person to encourage them in the engagement, which, according to her predictions, ended in a triumphant

triumphant victory and compleat deliverance. Of which she has lest an everlasting memorial in this song of praise here before us: which abounds with thankful acknowledgments of the mighty hand of God, aiding and assisting Israel in the day of battel, and makes honourable mention both of the Tribes and particular persons who signalized their zeal and valour on this occasion; and leaves a just mark upon others, who thro' cowardise, insidelity, or worldly policy forbore to appear and lend a helping hand to this work. And lastly, it contains an admonition to the adversaries and oppressors to sear the God of Israel, who is so mighty to save and deliver his People from all the powers of the sons of men.

the most High, and excites her victorious Israel to magnify their God. Then in transports of joy she invites all the Kings and Princes of the earth to listen to her song, to take notice that it is a Woman which triumphs over the nine hundred chariots and innumerable soldiers of the King of Canaan; and that not by the help of shield or spear, of which there was not seen one among the thousands of Israel, but by the interest which she had in Heaven, whose stars in their courses sought against Sisera, and discharged their Artillery of thunder and lightening, storms and tempests, upon the heads of his army.

WHEN she speaks of the want of shield and spear in Israel, I do not think she means that they were wholly unarmed; for no doubt but they had oxgoads, and other instruments which they used in the business of their houses and fields; but for weapons of war, both offensive and defensive, their oppressors had taken them all away, as we read the Philistines did aster-

wards, I Sam. xiii. So that they held them in subjection, without apprehending any danger from them : and it is very unlikely that the Israelites would have taken any measures to recover their liberty, if they had not been moved to attempt it by a special direction from God, with affurance that he would prosper their end avours, and crown them with success, by fending them immediate help from Heaven, as in fact he did; for the stars in their courses fought against Sifera: Which we may understand in the plain literal fense, without having recourse to any figure of Rhetorick for justifying the expression. It was no uncommon thing for God to fight from the clouds in defence of his People. Moses and Joshua had been thus affisted before, as Gideon, Samuel, Jehoshaphat, and others were afterwards. Neither was this kind of assistance confined to Israel; we read of the like in other histories. For Plutarch writes how Timoleon Prince of Corinth, a most worthy afferter of the liberties of mankind against the Tyrants of his time, was imployed in Sicily to deliver the cities of that island from various oppressors: And how in the course of his wars, an army of seventy thousand Carthaginians came against him in the open field, when he had but five thousand foot and one thousand horse of Corinthians to oppose them. But Timoleon trusting to the favour of Providence, and the goodness of his cause, attacked the Carthaginians in their passage over the river Crimisus. Whereupon Heaven declared for him in loud peals of thunder, which descending from the mountains came to the place of battel, and discharged such a tempest of wind, rain, hail, and lightening in the face of the Carthaginian Army, that they could neither hear the commands of their officers, nor see how to affault their enemies.

enemics. Besides, the dirt and slipperiness of the field was a great disadvantage to them; for being encumbered with breast-plates of iron and helmets of brass, and other harnels, when they were once down, it was impossible for them, under such a load, to dis-engage themselves from the mire, and rise again with their weapons in their hands. Likewise the river Crimisus swelling, partly with the excessive rain, and partly with the multitude of Carthaginians passing over it, and stopping its current, overflowed its banks, and made it uncertain for them where to set foot: So that the light-armed Corinthians had nothing else to do but destroy them at their ease, and make a prey of them. The circumstances of this victory so much resemble that of Deborah and Barak, that they well deferve to be mentioned together.

TO this may be added a more modern instance of miraculous victory; reported by Eusebius a christian writer, book v. ch. 5. of his Ecclefiastical History, which is this: That when Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Emperor of Rome in the second Century, had wars in Germany, his foldiers were very faint for want of water, and at the same time obliged to stand in array against their enemies. In this extremity such of his foldiers as were Christians, fell upon their knees, and earnestly befought God to give them rain. Whereupon so much rain fell as satisfied every one's thirst, accompanied with fuch thunder and lightening as destroyed many of their enemies, and put the rest to flight. This prodigy, fays our historian, is related both by Heathens and Christians. The Heathen indeed, who allowed the miracle, yet denied that it was obtained by the prayers of Christians. But he refers to a letter of the Emperors, wherein he attested, that his army being in Germany, and ready to perish for want of water, was preserved by the Christians prayers.

THUS hath God visibly affisted his People in the

day of battel.

2dly, AFTER due praises rendred to God, Deborab thankfully commemorates both the Tribes and particular persons who signalized their zeal and valour upon this occasion. To Barak she assigns the first place in this triumph, as being commander in chief of the Israelites army. Arise, and lead thy captivity captive, thou that haft dominion over the nobles among the people. Of the people who willingly offered themselves, at his invitation, to serve under the banner of the Lord of Hosts, were the children of Ephraim and Benjamin: out of Manasseb came captains with their companies; and tho' the Zebulunites were men of letters, chiefly bred to writing, yet their zeal carried them from their books to bear a part in this war. Zebulun and Nephthali hazarded their lives, and exposed themselves to imminent danger in the fore-front of the battel; and the Princes of Isfachar shewed themselves with Deborah, as foon as they heard the alarm of war, and brought many of their men into the fie'd.

BUT the person who has the largest share in this song of praise, is Just the wise of Heber the Kenite; whose husband was allied to Israel both by religion and affinity, as being descended from Jethro, Moses's sather-in-law. But there were no such bonds of relation between Heber's samily, and the Canaanites: 'tis only said that between Jabin King of Canaan and the house of Heber there was peace; that is, they were not in a state of hostility, but kept up a good understanding with one another, probably because Heber was not of the house of Israel, but only allied to it by a marriage

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which might not be known to Jabin, and therefore he had no quarrel with this sojourner. This is all I believe which is meant by the peace between Jabin and Heber. For I cannot think that there was any formal league between them, ratified with facrifice, or oath, or any folemn promise. Indeed I see no reason to believe, that Israel, whom Jabin oppressed, were enrangled in any fuch obligation. The honour of God would have been fo much concerned in such an obligation, that he would not have suffered, much less have incited and affifted his People to break faith even with their worst oppressors. He would not suffer them to violate such an oath with the Gibeonites, tho' made rathly, ignorantly, and contrary to the letter of his own Law; and he severely punished Zedekiah and his People for breaking their league made with the King of Babylon, tho' he was their great oppressor.

I conclude therefore, that God who forefaw the revolts of his People, and their oppressions consequent thereupon, having decreed to re-affert their liberty, and raise them again above their oppressors, was always pleased to order things so wisely and graciously, as to preferve his People from the snare of such obligations, that they might be free to take arms whenever he commanded them, and to strike in with the directions of his Prophets, and the advantages given them by his Providence for their deliverance. So that neither Othniel was engaged to the King of Mesopotamia, nor Ebud to the King of Moab, nor Deborah and Barak to the King of Canaan, by any obligations of religion or conscience, but were held in servitude by the meer force and arms of those oppressors, being always free in mind, and always restored to the freedom of their outward government with honour and a good conscience.

WITH the like good conscience did Jael, I suppose, execute the will of God upon Sisera. The peace which was between her house and Jabin, was not founded in any solemn contract, but only in a general good understanding, which left her hands at liberty to do the Will of God, according as his Spirit should move and direct her.

FOR that in destroying Sifera, she acted by the immediate impulse and direction of the divine Spirit, cannot be doubted. It does not appear, when she invited him into her Tent, that she had any such thought in her mind, but rather meant as he did, and intended to conceal him. But when she saw him fast asleep on the floor, an advantage which she did not expect, the was presently convinced that the God, whose servant she was, had delivered him into her hand, and plainly called upon her to destroy him, and so prevent any farther mischief which he might do to Ijrael, which might be very great, if he were suffered to escape. And perhaps this incident renewed the memory of some former intimation which God had given her (for fuch great things are often supernaturally intimated) that it should one day be in her power to deliver Israel from their greatest enemy. It is certain that this was foreseen by Deborah; for she tells Barak, that he should not have the honour of killing Sisera, for he should fall by the hand of a woman. And when Jael had killed him, she went out and met Barak, and both knew him and his bufiness, that he was in pursuit of Sifera, who lay dead in her tent. So that it is plain, this whole business was transacted by the special ordinance and direction

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of God Jael glorified him in it, acknowledging him hereby to be King of Kings, and that the he fometimes gave up Israel to be corrected by their enemies, yet that those enemies were doomed to destruction, and were like rods, to be cast into the fire, when the correction had attained its due effect. To burn such rods she esteemed a laudable work; and she was not mistaken in her opinion, if Deborah was a true Prophetes, who pronounces her blessed for this exploit, blessed above all the women in Israel.

3dly, AS Deborah makes honourable mention of fuch as fignalized their zeal and valour upon this occasion; so she justly animadverts upon others who thro' cowardise, insidelity, or worldly policy, forbore to appear, and put a helping hand to this work.

IT is observable that she has three ways of reproving those who did not appear in the field, and

joyn their brethren upon this occasion.

I. SHE says nothing of Judah, Simeon, or God; so that I fear they deserved no commendation; otherwise they would have had it with the best of their brethren. Not finding them here, I conclude they were absent; but for what reason is utterly unknown. Whatever it was, it is certainly some reproach to them to be passed over without any mention or place in the foregoing list.

II. REUBEN and Gilead, Dan and Asher are here recorded with dishonour, as preferring their private interest before the publick welfare. The first of these were the eldest Tribe, and should properly have been foremost in this glorious enterprize; but to stay at home as they did, and excuse themselves from being concerned in it, was a great disheartning to their brethren, and might have frustra-

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ted the whole design. For the divisions of Reuben there were great fearthings of heart: great reasonings amongst those who were rising against the Canaanites, why their brother Reuben sat still, and would not help them. And perhaps great debates amongst the heads of the Reubenites themselves, one part pleading for a compliance with their brethren, who were hazarding their lives for their religion and liberty; but others, who were the more numerous and prevailing fide, wished them to consider that their soldiers were undisciplined, unarmed, and their leader but a woman; that they should run a desperate danger in rising against a King, mighty in himself, and much strengthned by the alliance of several other Kings; that if they should miscarry in this attempt against him, they should be ruined for ever: and therefore it was best for them to keep the peace, and wait the farther progress of this business, before they engaged and became partners in it.

SUCH cautious measures as these seem to have kept Reuben among the sheep-folds: and the like prevailed with Dan and Asher to remain in their ships. Their Inheritance lay upon the coast of the Mediterranean, which led them to merchandise; upon which account they abounded in shipping, and were the less concerned for the state of the inland Country, and might think of securing themselves and their effects by putting off to sea, in case of any pressing danger from the Canaanites.

GILEAD abode beyond Jordan. Under the name of Gileadites are comprehended the Gadites, who living at such a distance, made that their excuse for not coming to assist their brethren in their present distress.

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III. BUT the greatest reproach of all is cast upon Meroz, a city near to the place where the battel was fought; which being of considerable strength, and able to have done good service, chose rather to stand out in a cold neutrality, than to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Which was a very bad example, and a stumbling-block to others, that a city so near, and so powerful, should shew no regard to the cause and command of God, no zeal for his honour and worship, no sympathy in the afflictions and perils of their brethren. Hence it is that while other Tribes are only mentioned with resentment for their failure of duty, Meroz is cursed with a bitter curse. And that this might not seem to proceed from inconsiderate passion, it is backed with the authority of Heaven, and pronounced by that Angel who ministred between God and Deborah in this affair. And it seems to be a notable effect of this curse, that the name of this city is blotted out, and not the least remains of it left upon earth.

NOW these Divisions show us the necessity of preserving our selves in the favour of God, since we can have so little dependance on men, though they are of the same country, of the same kindred, of the same religion, and have the same common share of prosperity or adversity with our selves. None of these considerations could move one half of Israel to assist the other, even when they were summoned from Heaven to unite, and recover their liberty.

INDEED if ten thousand men, unprovided of proper arms, had appeared in the field against nine hundred chariots, and ten times as many well-disciplined soldiers on the side of their oppressors, without having concerted such a stratagem, as might have

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turned the fortune of the battel on their side with little fighting, they had deserved the neglect due to hair-brained people, rushing upon their own destruction. But in this case they had such a stratagem, i. e. an assurance that God would fight for them, and surprize their enemies with his interposition, which would do more service than all the arms and arts of war.

THIS they were assured of by Deborah, whom they owned for a Prophetes, and had long resorted to her as the oracle of God, and saw her now at the head of this business, summoning all Israel in the name of God to come into it. In this she did no more than former Prophets and Deliverers had done, according to the usual course of their Government in such cases. And therefore to disobey her summons, was, upon their own principles of government, to disobey the voice of God. Which since one half of the Tribes ventured to do, 'tis very plain, as I just now observed, what little dependance we can have upon men for our deliverance.

IF we could stedfastly persevere and continue saithful in our duty to God, we should always be surrounded with the arms of his mercy, and enjoy the benefit of his protection; and then we should have no occasion for such deliverances, because we could not fall (I speak of our publick, not our private state) we could not fall into any great calamity. But such a good state of religion is scarce to be found any where for any long time together. For we cannot receive prosperity, the reward of it, but that proves a canker to our religion, and so destroys the root whereon our blessings grow. The fortune of Israel, as it is set forth in this book of Judges, is the picture of our

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own, fo far I mean, as to shew us how it varies, and the reason of its variation.

WHEN outward comforts fail us, we are more careful to get those of the mind, which result from communion with God, from the practice of virtue, and a good conscience. When we labour under grieyous straits and hardships, we are more mindful of our prayers, to try if we can obtain relief from God. Scarcity of provisions keeps under those carnal affections which grow inordinate thro' fulness, and break thro' the Laws of God and man. And when we hold our life in suspence by reason of any contagious sickness, or war in our gates, it is then most natural for us to look upward, and wish for a place in that happy Kingdom where life is fecure, and perfectly free from any danger or disturbance. Now those circumstances which dispose us to be thus serious and spiritually minded, we call afflictions, we are uneafie in them, we endeavour to remove them. And it pleases God fometimes to gratify our defires, and work out our deliverance; and we thank him for it. But how foon does fuch a change of condition commonly change our manners for the worse? So that we have seen the fame man very pious and virtuous when poor, very atheistical and profligate when rich. Cities and nations have run the same changes. The old Romans observe, that their Rome was never so pious, chaste and modest, as when Hannibal with his Carthaginians hovered about their gates; on the contrary, when they had conquered the World, their wickedness kept pace with their prosperity, and their great Emperors were the greatest slaves to all impiety and debauchery.

WHAT then? shall we not pray to God to deliver us from the fore-mentioned afflictions? shall we

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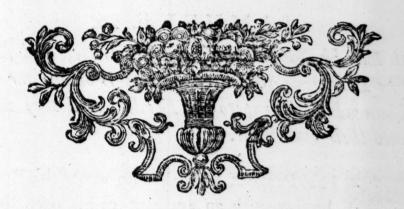
not render him thanks and praise for such deliverance? We are certainly bound to do both; otherwise we should rob him of the glory of rewarding and punishing mankind. But then let us be fure to befeech him to deliver us from our felves, from our own rebellious wills and passions, which are the root and ground of all our calamities, which rob us of our peace and plenty, which disarm us of our shield and spear, which turn the edge of our swords, and deliver us over to reproach, to be the prey and sport of our enemies. Israel had never been servants to the Moabites, Canaanites, and Philistines, if they had not first served their lusts and idols. And where is the city, nation, or empire, which now lies in ruines, whole destruction we cannot date from the overflowings of atheism and immorality amongst them?

I confess I could almost venture, upon this occasion, to change that saying of the Psalmist, that God sets up one, and puts down another. For tho' it be most true with respect to his hand which does this, yet he never does it but in consequence of mens demerits; their manners are the meritorious cause of his dispensations. I speak of the publick. The publick state of any people always corresponds with their general practice of religion and virtue.

WE never hear of Israel's falling into slavery, but we are first told of their falling from the Laws of their God. To the obedience of which they found it necessary to return, and confess their sins, and put away their lusts and idols, before they could get rid of their yoke, and obtain their freedom.

IF then we heartily join in the conclusion of this fong, and say, So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord, let us take heed that we be not of the number of those enemies,

enemies, and so render our selves obnoxious to our own imprecation. Such enemies were Israel, as oft as they violated the Law which God gave them by Moses: let us humbly beseech him to prevent us with his grace, that we Christians may not make our selves his enemies, and become liable to his judgments, by transgressing the precepts of our heavenly Legislator, Jesus Christ, his Son our Lord. To whom with Es.



VOL. II.

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SERMON



SERMON LV.

On the Third Sunday after TRINITY.

MORNING.

I SAMUEL ii. 20.

And Eli blessed Elkanah and his Wife, and said, The Lord give thee Seed of this Woman, for the Loan which is lent to the Lord. And they went unto their own home.



HE Prophet Samuel, who wrote this Book, begins with an account of his own Birth and Education. And first, he acquaints us that his Mother Hannah was married several Years before she had any Child,

infomuch that she seemed to be wholly Barren; which probably was the cause why his Father Elkanah, who was a Levite of Ramah in Mount Ephraim, out of a desire of having Children, married another Wise, as he might do by the Jewish Law, and was not disappointed. This created new Matter of Affliction to Hannah; for Peninnah the fruitful Wise carried it very insolently towards her, daily despising her, and upbraiding

braiding her with her Barrenness. However, Elkanah the Husband did all he could to comfort Hannah, and took all opportunities to shew her distinguishing Marks of his Esteem and Affection. Particularly when he went up to Shilob, as he did yearly at the three great Festivals, according to the Law, he treated his whole Family with plentiful Portions of his Peace-Offerings, such parts of them, I mean, as belonged to him that offered them. But to Hannah he gave a more excellent Portion than to any of the rest, in token of his extraordinary love and kindness to her. But the concern which the had for her Barrenness, and the insults of Peninnah upon that account, took away her Appetite, that she could neither eat nor drink.

THEREFORE she rose up, after Dinner was over, and went to the Tabernacle at the time of Evening Sacrifice, and with many Tears belought God to give her a Man-child, vowing that in acknowledgment of the Bleffing she would give him back again to God, and confign him to the Service of his House, and that he should be a Nazarite all the Days of his Life.

NOW Hannah prayed in her Heart, only her Lips moved, but her Voice was not heard; which Eli the High Priest who sate near, observing, commanded her to depart thence, supposing that she had drank too much Wine. But when she had told him she had drank nothing but Water, and that, being oppressed with Grief, she was come to the Tabernacle to beg of God to grant her a Child, Eli exhorted her to be of good Courage, and dismissed her with his bleffing and solemn Prayer to God to grant her Request.

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HEREUPON she was greatly comforted, and returned to her Husband full of good hope that her Prayers were heard, and eat her Meat with chearfulness and gladness of Heart. Accordingly God was gracious to her, and gave her power to conceive and bring forth a Son, whom she called Samuel, saying, because I have asked him of the Lord. For Saul-meel, which is contracted into Samuel, fignifies, Requested of God. This Child she suckled and nursed till he was fit to appear at the Tabernacle, and was capable of being initiated in the Service of it; then she carried him up to Shilob, and presented him to Eli, assuring him that this was the Child which she had prayed for at fuch a time, and that she was now come to fulfil the Vow which she had made upon that Occasion, and to confign him to the Service of God's House, fo long as the Lord should see fit to employ him in it, which was till he made him a Judge; after which he was not confined to Shiloh, but went about the Country to Betbel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh; and then fettled in his own House at Ramah.

NOW this character of Hannah, with which Samuel introduces the History of his own Life and Actions, is the more exact, because written by her own Son, who had often heard these things from his Mother's Mouth. She had told him of the fecret Prayer which she put up to God in the Tabernacle, when Eli markt the Motion of her Lips, but knew not what she said. She had acquainted him with the Vow which she then made, that she would consecrate him a Nazarite to God for ever. She had given him a Copy of the Song of Praise and Thanksgiving which she uttered in the Tabernacle, when she presented him there, and fulfilled her Vow.

Third Sunday after TRINITY. 405

THE character of this Holy Woman well deserves a place in the Sacred Writings, for the fake of many excellent Instructions which it affords us. For in her we see the reward of Temperance and Sanctity. Tertullian observes that her abstinence qualified her to be Mother of so great a Prophet as Samuel. This is certain in other instances of Sacred History, that the Mothers of extraordinary Persons have been very Temperate. Samson's Mother was forbid by an Angel to drink Wine or strong Drink, while she went with Child of him. John Baptist sprung from Parents of an unblameable Character; and our Bleffed Saviour was born of a pure Virgin. I dare not fay, that all gluttonous, drunken and debauched Children are the Offspring of luxurious unmortified Parents; but methinks 'tis very reasonable for Parents to conclude, that if the Root be unholy, the Branches will be so also.

2dly, IN Hannah we see the Reward of a patient trust and dependence on God. She had for many Years laboured under the Misfortune of Barrenness, and constantly prayed to God to grant her a Child. The accomplishment of her Request was long deferred: yet this delay did not discourage her from continuing instant in her Prayers; which were answered at last to her great Honour and full Satisfaction. Had she failed to repeat and inculcate her humble Address to Almighty God, she had been sent away without her Bleffing; which is the case of many who prefer their Petitions with Zeal at the first, but afterwards grow cold and careless, and think their Prayers are not heard, because they see not the answer of them in the thing prayed for. Whereas Perseverance in honest and reasonable Petitions, for the obtaining of some Good. Dd 3

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Good, or removal of some Evil, would be crowned with Success, if they would wait God's Time for the doing of it: who often exercises the Patience of his Supplicants with some Delay, for reasons best known to himself; but warns them not to grow weary, nor break off their Applications to him; for in his own good time they shall reap the Fruits of their Labours, and find their Patience well rewarded, if they faint not.

adly, IN Hannah we see the advantages of a meek and quiet Spirit, which suffereth injuries, and is not easily provoked. Barrenness was always esteemed a grievance to a married Woman, because one chief end of marriage was not answered; and it lessened her in the eyes of others; especially if there was a Rival, another Wife in the same Family who proved fruitful, as it happened in the present case, she would be sure to exalt herself far above the barren one, and cast innumerable reflections and reproaches upon her. Hannah had abundance of this mortifying Treatment, but the digested it all within her own heart, and returned nothing like it upon her infulting adversary. She committed her cause to God, who, she knew, made her to differ from the other at present, and, when he pleased, could make the barren to fill the house, and become a joyful mother of children. She was persuaded in her own mind of what she afterwards spoke out in her Song of thanksgiving, That God alone is the Author and giver of all good things, and that they are dispensed according to his will. And he often gives us demonstrations of this his Power, in bringing rich Men to decay, and raising poor starved Wretches to great plenty. He cuts off one Man by death, in the greatest

Third Sunday after TRINITY.

greatest strength, and restores another to full health and vigour, who in the opinion of all Men was going down to the grave. Those that are in the most abject and fordid state, he calls up, when he pleases, to the height of worldly glory; and abases those who walk in pride, and think they can never be moved. The strength of armed forces is nothing available, if not prospered by him; he throws down mighty conquerors, and fets their miserable slaves above them. By his bleffing, Women that long despaired of Children, have at last had a numerous offspring; and through his displeasure others, who with much pain and travail have brought forth many, have feen themfelves deprived of them all, and left childles. Talk therefore, says she, no more so exceeding proudly; this was good advice to Peninnab, and others like her, not to infult over those who were not so happy as themselves; let not arrogance come out of your mouth; forbear your reproaches, refrain from hard words; for God giveth and taketh away; he knows best what he has to do; and he will do whatsoever pleaseth him.

SUCH were the Sentiments of this pious Woman Hannah, as they appeared afterwards in the form of Thanksgiving which she composed, recorded in this second chapter; with such just reasonings she quieted her own mind, whenever any hard reslections were cast upon her to russe her. This humble resignation to God, and sense of his dispensations, recommended her to his peculiar favour, and engaged him to become her advocate. He saw that she had no inclination to revenge herself; he therefore undertakes to vindicate her cause.

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A ND 1st, God disposed the heart of her husband to be very tender towards her; insomuch that he loved her above his other wise that bare him children. And no doubt but he gave her the preserence in his affections, in regard of the meek and quiet Spirit which he observed to be in her: That when her adversary revised her with very provoking language, she did not fill his house with daily brawls and quarrels, as Women of another temper would have done, but kept the peace, and always preserved an agreeable humour.

and blessing of Eli the Priest: For when he charged her with drunkenness, she did not burst out into passionate complaints of his uncharitable censure, nor go away in a silent and sullen humour, but candidly explained her case to him, and modestly apologized for herself. Count not, said she, thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial, for I have drank neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my Soul before the Lord; in the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken. And Eli, quite changed with these words, answered, Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy Petition. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight, and so departed.

GOD having granted Hannah's Petition, in giving her a Son, she was careful to perform the Vow which she had made in order to obtain him; which was in general, that he should be a Nazarite. For, says she, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razour come upon his head. This latter clause is a sufficient intimation that Samuel was to be of the religious order called Nazarites, who besides letting the hair of their head grow, were bound to ab-

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stain from wine and strong drink, and not to come at a funeral, even of their own Parents or nearest Relations, as we learn Numb. vi.

THE Vow of the Nazarite might be for any limited time, more or less. But three we read of were perpetual Nazarites, viz. Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist. And in the case of Samuel we see, that the Parent might make the Vow, even before the Child was conceived, and the Child was bound to observe it in its sull extent.

HANNAH, to make her Vow the more effectual, and that her Son might be a fit present for God, took care to educate him herself, till he was fit to enter into the service of the Tabernacle; whose example I wish were more imitated by the Matrons of modern times; who too often content themselves to be Parents of the bodies of their Children, and trust the cultivation of their minds, and fashioning of their manners, to those who are commonly very unfit for works of such importance.

BUT that which makes this negligence the more dreadful and inexcusable, are the fatal consequences of it, which often light upon and punish those Parents, through whose fault Children were abandoned to the corruptions of the World; such Children quickly out-growing all manner of reverence to their Parents, and, like Hophni and Phineas, practising those vices in their houses and under their inspection, which put them to shame, and are a continual torment and vexation to them.

AND these ill-educated Children often carry the wrong bias of their education through their respective Families, and convey the curse to late Posterity; if indeed they have any Posterity of long

or three Generations, as it often happens through their lewd abuses of themselves, and their flagrant provocations of God and Man.

BUT the greatest curse of an ill Education is this, that those who have been bred in their tender years neither to sear God nor regard Man, are often advanced, when grown Men, to some share of publick Government in Church or State. What a dismal sace of things must then shew it self, when the Enemies of Religion are made the Guardians of it, and the Patriots and Protectors of Mankind are such as devour them with Cruelty, Oppression, Injustice, or lead them into Ruin by a profligate Example.

THIS shows how miserable that People must needs be, whose Princes and Chiefs, who are of course to hold the reins of Government, are not bred up in the fear of God; for that word alone comprehends the whole of a happy Education. He that is trained up in the fear of God, has learned to fee that he has a master in Heaven, to whom he must give an account for his dealings with Men; which moves him to discharge his office with a good Conscience, and to propagate this fear, the spring of truth and justice, as far among Mankind as ever he can. But he who is destitute of this Fear, has no concern for any thing but his own Lusts, which he will gratify, though he does it to the bane of all that are about him. Of all this we cannot have a more pregnant proof, than what the History before us affords us. For what became of Israel under the Government of Eli the Priest? They were oppressed and subdued by the Philistines, who took their most sacred

cred Palladium, the Ark of God, from them, as a judgment upon Eli for the ill ordering of his House, and suffering his Sons, who affifted him in the Government, to grow proud and lewd and downright Atheifts; for which reason both he and they were cut off in one day. Whereas Samuel, who had a true and constant fear of God, and reconciled the People to him by fasting and sacrifices, and caused them to put away Idols from among them, obtained help of God against the Philistines, by thunder from Heaven, which discomfitted their Army, and gave Israel an easy victory over them. And he ruled the People in great prosperity, and went about the Country every year administring impartial justice among them. This shows the great difference which a good or bad Education makes in the Governors of any People, and the influence which such Governors have upon the fortune of the Community where they prefide.

BLESSED therefore be such Mothers as Hanmab, who take pains with their young Children to
instill religious and virtuous Principles into their tender Minds. They, and they only are worthy to bear
and breed up great Princes and Priests, who shall
fill the Seats of Judicature, and administer true judgment unto the People. Such Holy Matrons shall be
had in everlasting Remembrance: the People shall
rise up at the mention of them, and call them blessed.

Y E A God shall bless them, and build them a sure House, and multiply their Name upon Earth. When Elkanah and Hannah had presented Samuel to Eli, as their Free-will offering for the Service of the Tabernacle.

Tabernacle, Eli uttered a hearty Prayer, that God would encrease their Family, in consideration of that Child which they had lent to the Lord. And prefently we are told that Hannah's Piety was rewarded with three more Sons and two Daughters. So that she who for many Years had continued Barren, is fuddainly become the Mother of fix Children. In like manner God multiplied the Flocks and Herds, and Fruits of the Earth to those who piously offered him the Tythes and first Fruits of their Substance. On the other hand, when they with-held his Portion from him, he visited them with Blasting and Mildews, Locusts and Caterpillars, want of Rain, and Murrain among their Cattle, to shew them the difference between their pious observance, and their neglect of him. He would sometimes give them a plentiful Crop, and then by a suddain destruction fweep it away, to make them sensible of the sacrilegious Frauds which they committed against him.

AND when the People complained, as they did in the Prophet Malachi's Time, that a Curse lay upon their Land, God shews them the cause of it; even because they offered polluted Bread upon his Altar, and sacrificed to him of the blind and lame, and diseased of their Flocks, and robbed him in Tythes and Offerings; which if they would conscientiously pay and restore, he promises them to open the windows of Heaven, and pour them down such a Blessing, that there should not be room enough to receive it, Mal. iii. 10.

BY such instances as these God has abundantly declared to all the World, that he will be our gracious Father, or severe Judge, according as we shall perform

form our Duty to him. And he has comprehended all that can be said to this purpose, in a very brief Declaration which he made to the House of Eli, towards the end of this Chapter, whence my Text is taken, Those that honour me, I will honour; and

they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.

GOD indeed never wanted the Services of Angels or Men; we cannot profit him by any thing that we can do for him, nor can our goodness extend to him; for when we serve him, we serve him of his own, and can offer nothing to him, but what we first received from him. But notwithstanding this, he puts a wide difference between the Righteous and the Wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not. Even in this life he plainly distinguishes them, by putting marks of his Favour on the one sort, and tokens of his Indignation on the other.

IT is therefore an impudent infinuation, because contrary to experience, which the Enemies of Religion make against it, as if it did not conduce to the happiness of mankind in this Life. For even in this present State God plainly blesseth those that seek him, and punisheth those that neglect and sin against him. He that glorifieth God by worshipping him, recommends himself to his Protection, and is delivered from innumerable Evils: He that conscientiously pays what is due to Sacred Uses, and over and above fuch dues sometimes gives a Free-will offering, as occasion shall require, finds an encrease of his Substance in the City, or in the Field. He that gives Alms of his Goods according to his Ability, and delights in Works of Charity and Mercy, experiences the

the truth of those promises even now among Men, that the merciful shall obtain Mercy; That he who giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and whatever he layeth out, it shall be paid him again. Finally, he that, with Holy Men and Women of the best Times, trains up his Children and Houshold to sear God and keep his Commandments, hath abundantly more Satisfaction in his Family, is better obeyed and honoured by them, sees them more prosperous, respected, and advanced in the World, than the Generation of Libertines and desources, who have no Religion nor good Government among them.

THERE is, notwithstanding all the Atheism, Heresies, and Blasphemies of Reprobates, there is an all-seeing Eye which continually inspects the ways and doings of the Children of Men; and there is an omnipotent Hand stretcht out from Heaven, which dispenses Rewards and Punishments to us according to our Works. And whoever shall deny that there is a God which judgeth in the earth, may as well deny that there is any such thing as Day and Night, Summer and Winter, Seed-time and Harvest in the World.

LET us then walk as those that have a sense of the inspection of this omniscient Being, and act as Men who believe they shall be protected and blessed by this omnipotent Hand. And then, with this Holy Woman Hannah, we shall reap the Benefit of the Sacerdotal Blessing, and be helped and assisted by the Prayers of God's People, and above all, taste the Comforts of that gracious Pardon and everlasting Peace which is working out for us, through our only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, &c.



SERMON LVI.

On the Third Sunday after TRINITY.

EVENING.

1 SAMUEL iii. 12, 13.

In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken against his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.



F the four Sons of Aaron, we read that two died before him, and two survived him. Eleazar the elder of the survivors succeeded by his birthright in the High-priest's office, and his children after him, for some

Generations. 'Till at last, for a reason unknown to us, the posterity of *Ithamar*, *Aaron*'s youngest Son, became High-priests, beginning with this *Eli*, whose history is here before us, who was both Chief-priest and Judge of *Israel*. This was a common thing in ancient

ancient times, for the same person to be chief both in facred and civil matters.

HOW Eli governed Israel, we are not told, but may guess by the condition of his own Family, which was very loofe and disorderly. His two Sons, grown men, and in the Priest's office, were impious towards God, and injurious towards their Brethren. For not content to receive such parts of the Sacrifices as the divine Law had allotted them, they took what they liked best, sodden or raw, and many times before it was offered upon the Altar, and that in such a rude and prophane way, as made people abhor the offerings of the Lord, and debased the majesty of religion, and made it contemptible in their eyes.

LIKEWISE they abused the women who came to the Tabernacle for devotion, ravishing some, as 70sephus affirms, and corrupting others by presents, and that so commonly and grosly, that all Israel rung with the infamous reports, and there were not wanting some who carried complaints of them to their aged Father, and gave him full information of their wicked behaviour.

ELI was moved with these complaints, and thereupon took his opportunity to give his Sons reproof and counsel. Why do you mis-behave your selves fo strangely? said he. I hear of your evil-doings

- by all the people. You who should be their reformers, are their tempters and seducers to iniquity.
- When the people commit any trespass, we who are
- Priests and Judges intercede for them with God, and
- do right to an injured neighbour: but when we our
- felves break those Laws whereof we are guardians,
- who shall intercede for us?

SUCH was the reprimand which Eli gave his Sons; but they slighted it, and still continued in their evil courses; which though their Father saw, yet he proceeded no farther to restrain them than by such kind of reproof. This lenity brought down the judgments of God upon him, his children and people. God was not at all satisfied with this way of correcting vice, but charges it home upon Eli, that he suffered his Sons to make themselves vile without restraining them.

WE see then that these words went for nothing in God's account. Eli shewed his displeasure at his Sons manners; and if this had reformed them, it had been very well. But when he found it ineffectual, should he have stopt here? No; he should have laid aside the Parent, and have exerted the authority of the Chief-Priest and the Judge. He should have punished these offenders with all the pains which the Laws impowered and obliged him to inflict in fuch cases: which I believe would have been the pains of death. But if he had not proceeded so far, he should have removed them from their office, and put them under fuch confinement, that they might not go abroad to act their wickedness among the people. If he had dealt thus with them, he had effectually restrained them.

BECAUSE he did not do this, God was highly offended with him, and denounced his judgments against his house by two special Messengers. First by a Prophet whose name is not told, but his message is recorded in the foregoing Chapter. It begins with an expostulation concerning God's distinguishing favours to Eli's Family, in preferring them before all the Vol. II.

Tribes of Ifrael to the Priesthood, an office of the highest dignity, and endowed with a most easy and plentiful maintenance. Wherefore then, says God, do ye kick at my Sacrifice, and not content with vour own portion, have facrilegiously incroached upon the fat of the offerings, which belongs to me? and thou honourest thy sons above me, by studying to please them rather than me; not punishing them for their fins, nor turning them out of the Priest's 6 office, which they have so shamefully prophaned, as it is your place, and duty to do.' This is exactly what Josephus says, that Eli loved his children more than the service of God, and thereby drew down his curse upon them. Expect therefore, says God. to find me an avenger of fuch contempts and affronts; For those that honour me, I will honour; and they

that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.

BEHOLD, I will cut off thy arm, i. c. thy two Sons, Hopbni and Phineas, whose tragical death shall be an earnest to thee, that I will fulfil all the rest of my threatnings: and I will cut off the arm of thy Father's house, as it happened afterwards at Nob, where Saul, at the instigation of Doeg, massacred eighty five Priests in one day: neither shall there be an old man of thy progeny, for they shall all die in the flower of their age.

AND thou shalt see an enemy in my babitation, the Philistines, Chap. 4. who took the ark of God, and with it the life of Eli and several of his children: and thy posterity shall see an adversary in my Temple, a Highpriest of another Family set above them. For I will raise me up a faithful High-priest, Zadok, of the line of Eleazar, who shall do all my pleasure. He shall walk before

ple which he shall build, and his children after him for ever. And every one that is left of thy Family, shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver, and for a morsel of bread; and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the Priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

THIS is the substance of the first Message which God sent to Eli, which I have been the more particular in reciting, because it is not so much repeated afterwards as confirmed by Samuel. And this second denunciation serves to inform us, that neither had Eli, upon the first notice of God's wrath, changed his conduct towards his children, neither had God, in the time between these Messages, altered any thing of his first sentence, but here he ratisses and confirms it by Samuel in as strong terms as language can afford. I have sworn, says he, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

BESIDES, there were several Circumstances in Samuel's person, which added to his Message the

greatest credit and authority.

1st, SAMUEL, at this time, was but a child of twelve years old, as Josephus, with great probability, reckons. Which age exempts him from all suspicion of inventing this Message, or any part of it. We may depend upon his innocent simplicity for it, that he reported it in the same words as God had dictated to him.

2dly, SAMUEL regarded Eli with a truer affection than his own Sons: he was attendant upon his person day and night, was very observant of his commands, and careful not to give him any offence: For which reason he was loath to let Eli know what God

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had revealed to him, and would not speak of it, till he was adjured in the most solemn manner to declare it.

3dly, THIS was the first time that the word of the Lord came to Samuel. He was far from knowing it at first hearing. Thrice he was persuaded that Eli had called him; for they lodged not far from each other in the court of the Tabernacle. Eli satisfied him that it was the word of the Lord: and God took this way of revealing himself to Samuel, both to establish his character and reputation as a Prophet, and likewise to awaken Eli to expect the judgments, which he had denounced against his Family by a former Prophet, and which he quickly began to execute, as we read in the following Chapter.

FOR there we presently have an account of two unfortunate Battles which Israel fought with their mortal enemies and oppressors the Philistines: who seem to have been the aggressors, taking advantage of the low estate which the Hebrews were now in, to make reprisals for the damages done them under the late Government of Sampson. So they took the field and came up to Aphek, a frontier town in the Tribe of Judah: where they halted a while; but meeting with no opposition, they advanced as far as the place afterwards named Eben-ezer, and came to an engagement with the army of Israel, and slew four thousand of them.

UPON this defeat, the Israelites who escaped to their Camp, entred into consultation about their farther proceedings. Wherefore, say they, hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines? This question Samuel, though a child, could have answered, if they

had asked him. But indeed it is strange that any of them should make a question of it, when they all must know, upon a little serious reslection on their behaviour towards God, how much both Priests and People had offended him, by their forementioned corruptions, and by their idolatries, which though not mentioned here, yet are pointed at by the Pfalmift, Psal. lxxviii. and were afterwards discovered, and in good measure reformed by Samuel, Chap. vii. upon which their arms prevailed; I should rather say, God fought for them from Heaven against these Philistines. But to hope for his affiftance while they continued in these sins, and that notwithstanding his late warnings by his Prophets, that they must expect speedily to feel the effects of his anger, was nothing else but a proof of their unaccountable infatuation.

HOWEVER, in their Council of war, they proposed this expedient; 'Let us fetch the Ark of the 'Covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh, that when it comes amongst us, it may save us out of the hands of our Enemies.' But they considered not, says their Historian Josephus, that God who had pronounced the sentence of their calamity against them, was greater than the Ark, which deserved not to be reverenced but for his sake. Well, says he, the Ark was brought into their Camp, and the Sons of Eli attended it, whom their Father charged with the care of it, telling them that if they should happen to lose it, they must never see his sace again.

WHEN the Camp of Israel saw the Ark, they shouted so loud, that the Earth rang again. Which the Philistines understanding, were as much dismayed. For they considered that this had never been done in their

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Wars before, and apprehended some wonderful effect from it, and cryed out, 'We are undone; who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty Gods, who smote Egypt with such dreadful plagues?' But their officers animated them to fight courageously, and think of nothing but victory or death. 'For, faid they, if these Hebrews should become your massers, as you have been theirs, they will be terribly revenged on you, for those hardships which they have suffered under you. So that you had better die bravely, than spare your selves to become their slaves.'

THE Philistines hearkned to the voice of their Commanders, and charged the Israelites with such desperate sury, that they quickly turned their backs and sled to their Tents. There sell of them about thirty thousand men, among whom were the two Sons of the High-priest: at the same time the Ark was taken, and carried away by the Enemy into their own country.

AS foon as the news of this defeat was brought to Shiloh, and it was certainly known that the Ark of God was taken (for a young Benjamite who escaped out of the battle, brought this report with his cloaths rent, and earth upon his head) all the city was filled with lamentations. Eli the High-priest was sitting near the Gate, in great concern to know how things went. When he heard the rumor, that he might know the certain truth, he sent for the young man, who informed him of every thing that had happened. The sate of his Sons and the army he heard with great moderation, because he had been forewarned of it; and those things which are foreseen, are less affecting when they come to pass. But when he understood that the

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Ark was taken and in the Enemies hands, this calamity so amazed him, that he fell backward from off his feat, and being very aged and unweildy, the fall dislocated the *Vertebræ* of his neck, and put an end to his life, in the ninety eighth year of his age, after he

had judged Israel forty years.

THE same day died the wife of Phineas, soon after she had heard of the death of her husband: for she was with child, and near her time, and upon the news of the destruction of Israel, she fell into labour, and brought forth a Son, whom she named Ichabod, which signifies, what is become of our Glory? meaning, that it was all darkned and turned into dishonour, because the Ark of God was taken by the Insidels, and because her father-in-law and husband were come to such untimely ends.

SUCH were God's dispensations towards the house of Eli: and the reason of them is easily understood from the words of my Text. I have told him, says he, that I will judge his house for ever; for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his Sons made themselves vile,

and he restrained them not.

NOW fince we have seen the sharpness of Eli's sufferings, let us consider a little more particularly the aggravations of his sin, which brought them upon him.

I. ELI was the High-priest of a holy God and a pure religion; which laid him under a special obligation to see that all good order and decorum was observed in the sacred administrations. For next under God, his house was to be the sountain of Holiness to all the people. Intolerable therefore was the behaviour of his Sons, who so horribly corrupted this fountain by their luxury and lewdness. The sin of

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these young men was very great, since the law of their Priesthood neither tied them up to a starving maintenance, nor abstinence from marriage. But when they abandoned themselves to Enormities, who but their Father should have restrained them? They were his children, under his roof, subject to his authority and disposal. They were out of the reach of all others but himself. He alone was answerable for their manners to God and to the people. He could not be ignorant of that necessary qualification which St. Paul puts into the character of a High-priest; for even nature and common sense suggest it; that be should rule his own house well, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own House, how shall be take care of the Church of God?

II. ELI was the Judge of Israel, the great Oracle and Guardian of their Laws, the dispenser of justice and judgment; which made it the greater reproach to him, that two fuch criminals as his own Sons should be endured in his own house. For with what face could he condemn and punish those sins in others, which were known to be practifed in his own family, under his own inspection, and that with no more animadversion than that of a mild reproof? No doubt but his lenity towards his own children caused him to execute the Laws very negligently in more remote cases; and consequently his people must grow bold in those vices for which they had such great examples, and multitudes of them must become ripe for that sword which destroyed his Sons. It is a common case, and can never be otherwise, that those who have the administration of the Laws of holiness

and virtue, cannot heartily enforce them upon others, when they are notoriously broken in their own families. And this is the reason why vice prevails so much in the World; not so much for want of hands armed with power to suppress it, but because their power is enervated by their practice of that very thing which they should restrain.

III. IT was a great aggravation of Eli's fin, that he knew of his Sons Excesses; he heard of them, as we fay, with both ears, from God and men. For though his eyes were dim, that he could not see clearly, yet his hearing was good to the last, as we find by the very last passage of his life. When he reproved his Sons (which was before either of the Messages was brought to him from God) he told them that he heard of their evil dealings by all the people. And therefore it is faid in my Text, that be knew of their iniquity. Whether he had any intimations of it from God before these Messages, concerns us not to know; he was sufficiently apprized of it by common fame and his own observation. knew the facts, and must know that they were fins, even without the information of that Law which he was bound to study; and in men of his Sons profesfion and character, he knew that they were exceeding finful.

IV. EL1's lenity towards his Sons, was an unworthy return of the favours which he had received from God. It is thought that he was the first of the family of *Ithamar* who was raised to the High-priesthood. But if he had received it by a long succession, the nature of his office led him in every thing to act with a zeal for God's glory, superior to all worldly

considerations. But the Prophet charged him with this ingratitude, that he honoured his Sons above his God. And indeed the case it self speaks as much. For what man, who had a just regard for the honour of God, could have received two such Messages from him (to say nothing of the complaints of the people) and after all have suffered two such offensive Sons to have continued in the most sacred office till the day of their death? This was not to receive Laws, but to give them, and to say to God, Not thine, but my will be done.

NOW for a grave man, who by his Office was the Priest of God, the protector of his people, and the administrator of the divine Law, to maintain two men, because they were his Sons, in the most gross contempt and violation of that Law, against visions, revelations, complaints, and all the loud remonstrances of Heaven and Earth; was such a breach of trust, such an invasion of the divine authority, such a robbing God of his honour, as fully justified him in all the wrath and indignation which he poured out upon this licentious Family.

AND if we do not often see the same pride and contempt of God visited with as sore a vengeance, it is not because it is now less offensive to him, but because he does not see sit to make daily examples soften such offenders.

I doubt not but there have been numberless instances of parents and magistrates, against whom the wrath of God has been revealed from Heaven, for this very fault here before us. But the case of Eli is so fully set forth, so clearly adjudged by the express word of God, that to all who believe and know that

word, it is a fufficient instruction how they ought to discharge the duty of Parents and Magistrates. That they should imprint this fundamental rule of Government upon their hearts, that God is the Lord and Father of all mankind; that we are all his children and fervants, acting as in his Family, and accountable to him for the duties of our feveral stations and offices. That if we govern those committed to our charge with fuch partial affections as are subversive of his Law, we teach rebellion against our supreme Father, and are the ruin of those whom we so foolishly indulge. Eli's hiftory tells us, that fuch indulgence is real hatred, under the falle appearance of love, and that he and his children might have gone to their graves in the peace and favour of God, if he had brought them up with that firict nurture and discipline which he had power to exercise over them. By neglecting of which, he was fadly answerable for their manners, and for all which they suffered afterwards upon that account: And he was punished with the revelation of their tragical fentence, pronounced and repeated from the divine tribunal, which he lived to fee executed upon them.

AND what could he fay, when he heard of the Execution, and compared it with those Messages from God which had forewarned him of it? Must he not say, that it was not the Sword of the Philistines, but his own Misconduct in Government, which had slain his sons, with thirty four thousand of the people, and carried the Ark into captivity?

TO the like Misconduct are certainly owing the calamities of other houses, cities, and nations. Where the education of children and government of people

is not strict enough to maintain the sear of God, there the vices of unclearness, intemperance, rioting and gaming, prophane swearing and cursing will grow predominant, and render people so vile, that like ill weeds they are sit for nothing but to be cut down and cast into the sire. So much does our good estate, both spiritual and temporal, depend upon good Government.

AND I believe there are no civilized people who are not sensible of this. To step a little out of the limits of facred writ, I find the Chinese were perfuaded, that the virtue of Governours was the furest way to make the Governed virtuous; and that their Kings thought themselves answerable to God for the wicked manners of their Kingdom. 6 The virtue of Governors, say they, the art of ruling well, is the Gift of Heaven; but the virtue of subjects is the work of good Kings, i. e. the effect of their admiinistration and good example. It is an easie matter, fay they, to punish, but the glory of the Magistrate is to prevent crimes by his vigilant care and practice.' And they extol one of their Kings, that in a reign of twenty two years, the people felt no more of the weight of his authority, than we do of the Heavens over our heads. To make this out, they affirm that there was not one fingle Process in all China, not one Execution during his reign; so effectual was his care in preventing the growth of vice. Of another of their Princes they report, that when his country had been afflicted with seven years famine, he interpreted it as God's displeasure for some male administration in his Government, and thereupon devoted himself to die, and become a facrifice for his own and his

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peoples sins. But their history adds, that God was satisfied with the piety of his intention, and prevented the execution of it, by sending a speedy rain, which scaused the Earth to bring forth abundantly. Now whether these Narratives were realities or sictions, is of no great moment for us to know. It is enough that we learn hence, what opinion these people had of good Government, that it was the foundation of all their enjoyments and happiness.

TO all such therefore as have any command over others, from the poorest Parent to the highest Prince, the Oracle of God is this; 'If ye would not be partakers in other mens sins, if ye would not be

- the authors of their present and future miseries,
- teach them to fear God and keep his command-
- ' ments; watch narrowly over their inclinations, and as you find them bent to any evil courses, give a
- timely check to such propensions, and take care to
- restrain them by counsels, by threatnings, by pu-
- inishments, that they become not vile in their do-
- ' ings, and by adding to the corruptions, add to the
- ' calamities of the World about them.'

HOW does that Mother's practice contradict her pretentions, who feems studious of her children's welfare, while she is careless of their manners? Who spares for no cost and pains in teaching them all fashionable accomplishments, but neglects the one thing needful, the fear of God? Who is quick in getting remedies for bodily distempers, while she suffers the diseases of the soul to rankle and grow inveterate; and sees without affrightment that monster of irreligion growing up in her Family, which subjects her dearest pledges to the sate of Eli's children.

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MAY his Example awaken all such as are concerned in it, and teach them to practise such obedience towards their heavenly Father, as he requires of them in his holy word, preferring his honour above all earthly creatures, and causing all the souls and people over whom they preside, to praise him. The Generations of such faithful men shall be blessed; peace shall be within their borders, and plenteousness within their palaces. In thus glorifying God, they will save themselves and those committed to their charge, through his merits and mediation who came to teach us this obedience, and to give us the reward of it, Jesus Christ our Lord, To whom, &c.

The End of the Second Volume.



